JUNJI ITO

VENUS IN THE BLIND SPOT

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CONTENTS

BILLIONS ALONE

PANT PANT
PANT
SNIFF SNIFF
HUH? WHAT IS IT, SHIRO?
HM?
AAAAH!!

BILLIONS ALONE

THE BODIES WERE FIRMLY SEWN TOGETHER WITH WHAT APPEARS TO BE FISHING LINE.

THE TWO BODIES DISCOVERED IN A POND IN THE PARK EARLY THIS MORNING...

...HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS A COUPLE WHO HAD RECENTLY GONE MISSING.

MICHIO? MICHIO... ARE YOU AWAKE?

THE POLICE STRONGLY BELIEVE THIS IS THE WORK OF A DEVIANT MIND.

LEAVE ME ALONE, MOM.

SHUT UP.

MICHIO? HOW ABOUT YOU GO FOR A WALK SOME-TIME?

IT'D BE A NICE CHANGE OF PACE.

I'LL JUST LEAVE LUNCH HERE FOR YOU.

AND ALSO, NOTICES FOR YOUR COMING-OF-AGE CEREMONY AND CLASS REUNION NEXT YEAR HAVE COME ALREADY.

I'LL LEAVE THEM HERE WITH YOUR LUNCH.

I SAID, LEAVE ME ALONE!

BUT, MICHIO, YOU'VE BEEN LOCKED UP IN THAT ROOM FOR SEVEN YEARS NOW.

AND YOU'LL BE 20 NEXT YEAR...

KWEEEEEN
ZUN BAM BAM BAM

I WONDER WHAT NATSUKO HORIE'S DOING THESE DAYS.
THAT REMINDS ME.
CLASS REUNION, HUH...
DUN DUN
ZUN BAM BAM
RSVP
will attend
will not attend
Name
Address

SHE WAS CUTE. AND CHEERFUL. AND POPULAR...
SHE WAS PROBABLY JUST TRYING TO BE NICE.
NATSUKO HORIE... SHE WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO STOOD UP FOR ME IN ELEMENTARY AND JUNIOR HIGH...
...WHEN NO ONE WOULD EVEN TALK TO ME.
TOSS

EVERYONE, COME TOGETHER ...
COME TOGETHER... COME TOGETHER...
KWEEEEEEEEEN...
ZUN BAM BAM BAM
KWEEEEEEN
BEING BY YOURSELF'S BORING ...
BILLIONS ALONE... BILLIONS ALONE...
REACH OUT FROM THE HEART...
WE'RE ALL FRIENDS... ALL FRIENDS ...
BEING BY YOURSELF'S BORING ...
BEING BY YOURSELF'S THE ONLY WAY.
HMPH. TOTALLY STUPID. HOW EXACTLY ARE WE ALL FRIENDS?
LET'S ALL COME TOGETHER...
WE'RE ALL FRIENDS... ALL FRIENDS ...
BILLIONS ALONE... BILLIONS ALONE...
REACH OUT FROM THE HEART...
LET'S ALL HOLD HANDS...
...WHAT IS THIS? THE RADIO?

DING DONG

WHO MIGHT YOU BE?

I... MY NAME'S NATSUKO HORIE. I USED TO GO TO SCHOOL WITH MICHIO.

IS HE HOME?

MICHIO!

MICHIO!

YOU HAVE A GUEST.

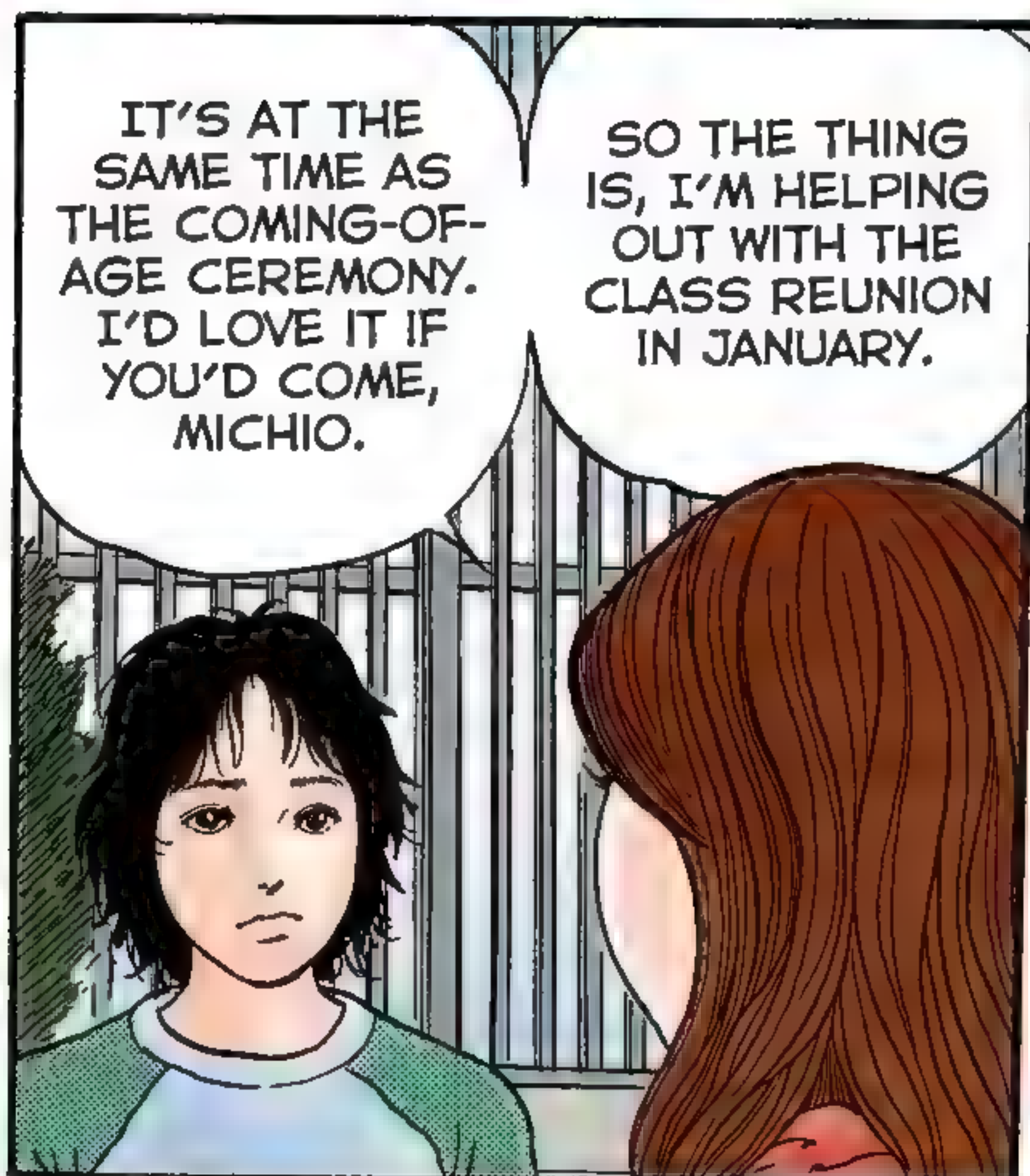
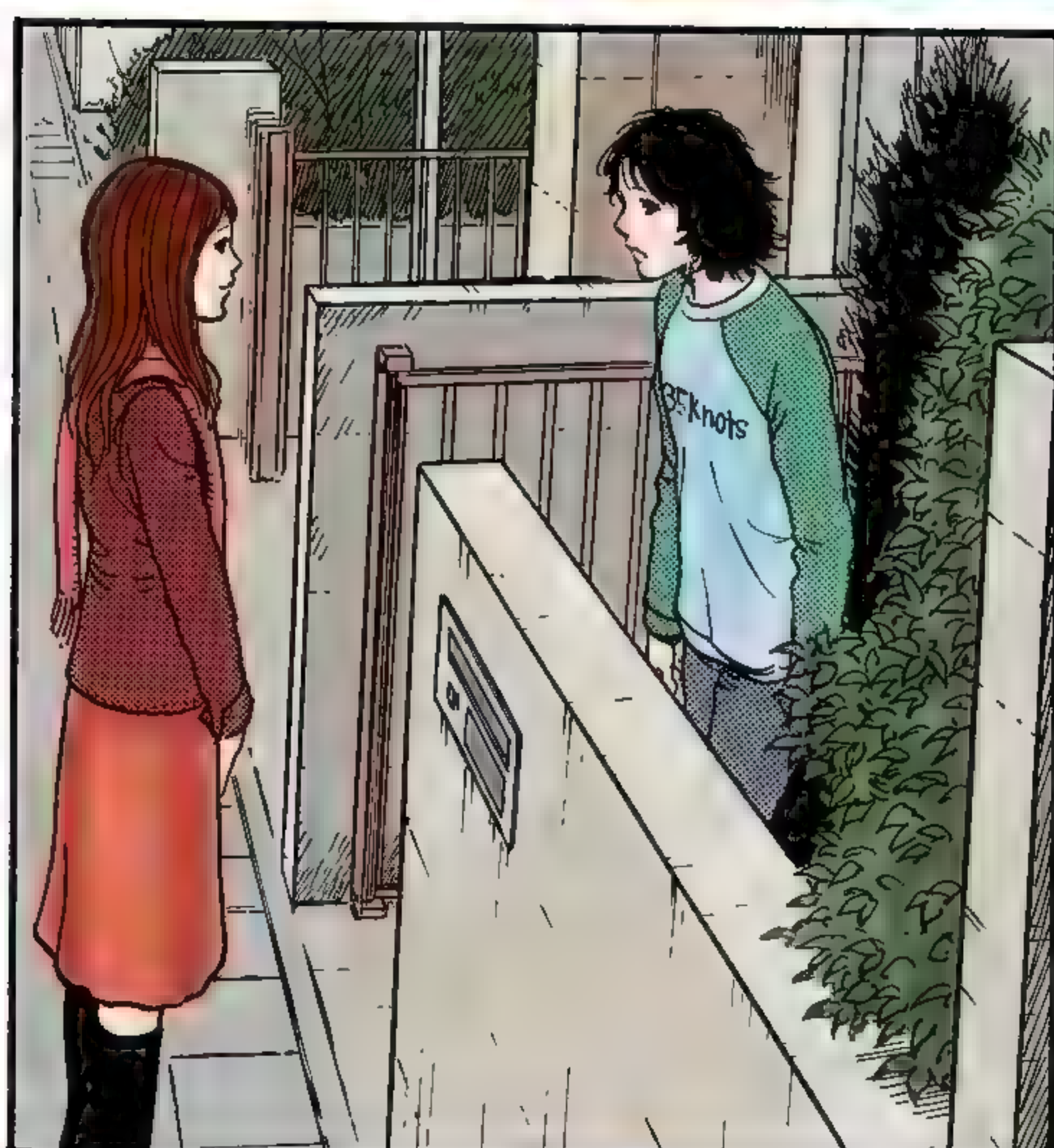
IT'S NATSUKO HORIE... WILL YOU COME TALK TO HER?

WHAT?!

DID SHE SAY NATSUKO HORIE?

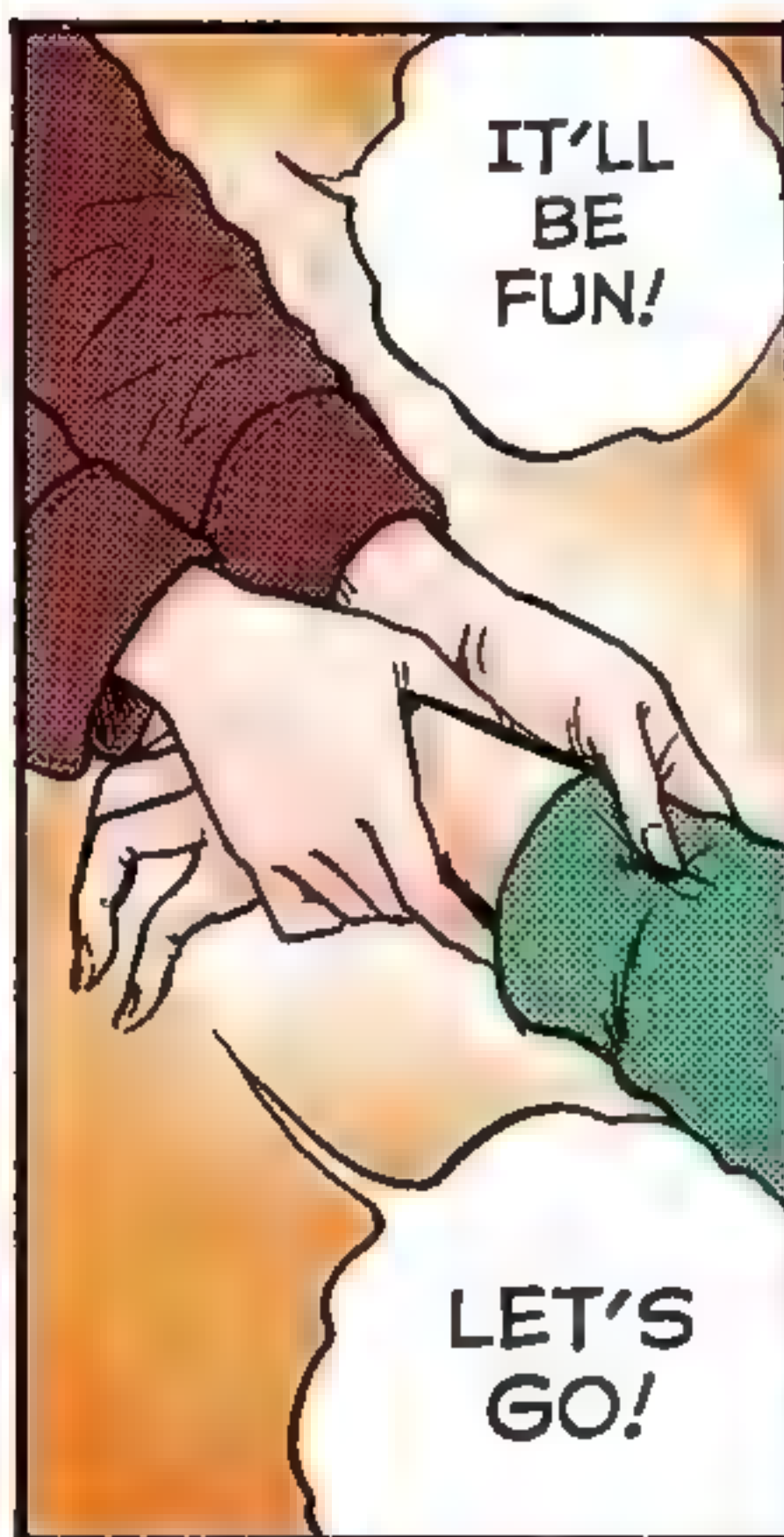
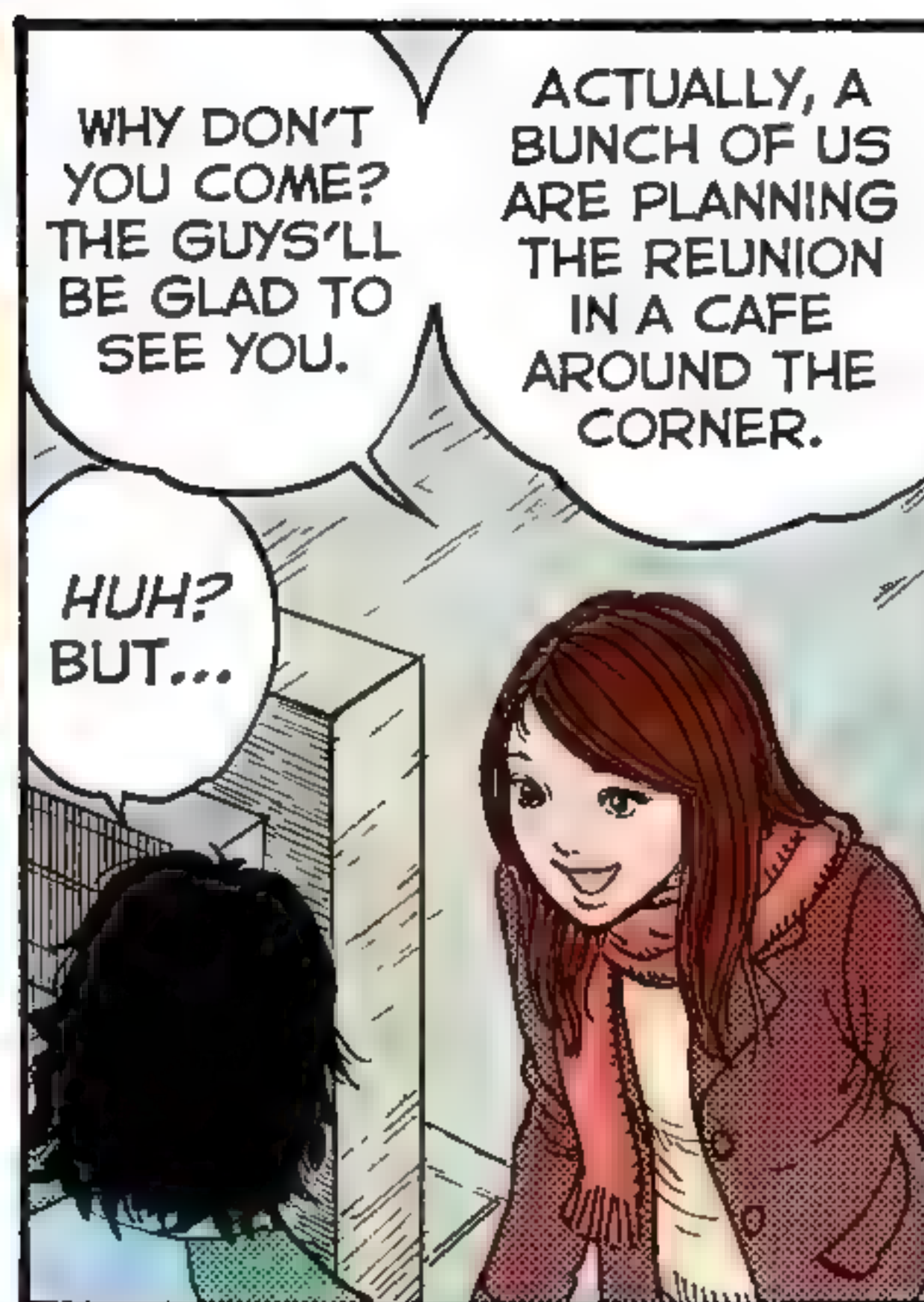
WHY WOULD SHE ...?

35 knots

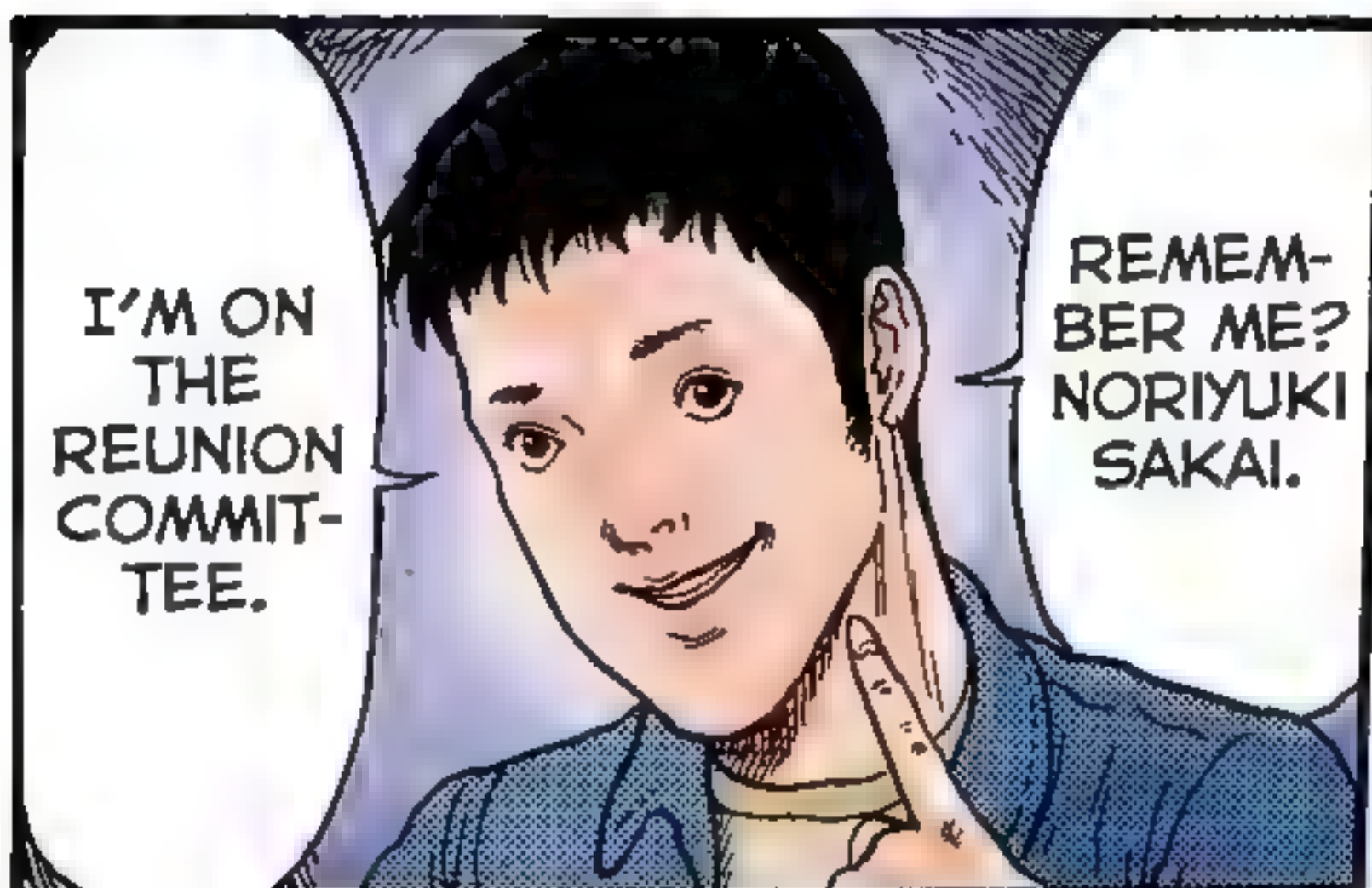
I-IT REALLY IS NATSUKO.
SHE'S GOTTEN SO PRETTY.
BA-DMP
BA-DMP
MICHIO? HOW ABOUT IT?
OR SHOULD I SEND HER HOME?
I...
...I'LL COME DOWN.
MICHIO! HOW ARE YOU?
IT'S BEEN ABOUT SEVEN YEARS, I GUESS?
Y-YEAH.
EVERYONE'S WORRIED. YOU STOPPED COMING TO SCHOOL IN SEVENTH GRADE.
AND I HEARD YOU DON'T GO OUT MUCH. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YEAH... TOTALLY FINE.
SO THE THING IS, I'M HELPING OUT WITH THE CLASS REUNION IN JANUARY.
IT'S AT THE SAME TIME AS THE COMING-OF-AGE CEREMONY. I'D LOVE IT IF YOU'D COME, MICHIO.

Rest Cafe Ren Ren

IT'LL BE FUN!

LET'S GO!

ACTUALLY, A BUNCH OF US ARE PLANNING THE REUNION IN A CAFE AROUND THE CORNER.

WHY DON'T YOU COME? THE GUYS'LL BE GLAD TO SEE YOU.

HUH? BUT...

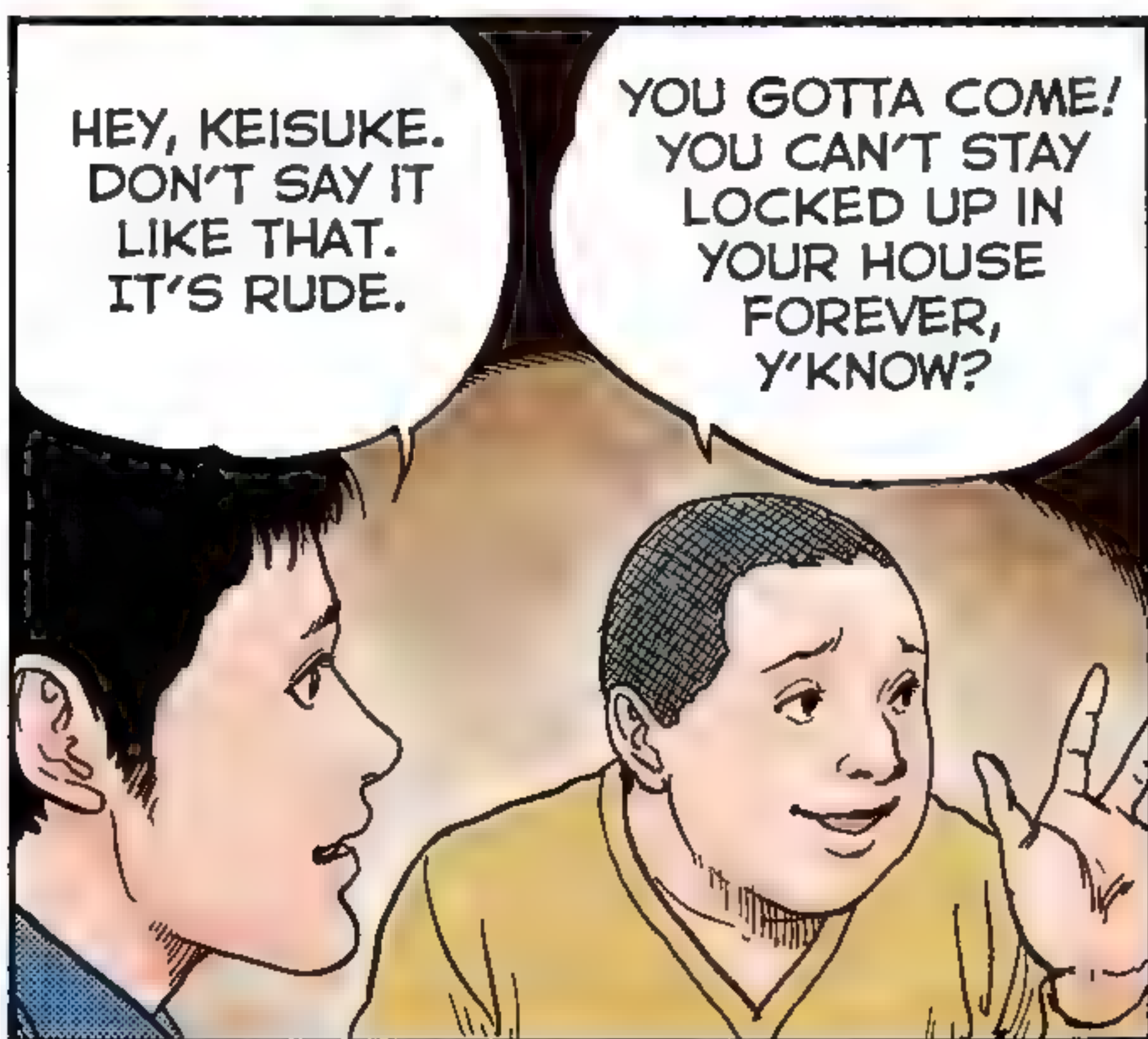
REMEM-BER ME? NORIYUKI SAKAI.

I'M ON THE REUNION COMMIT-TEE.

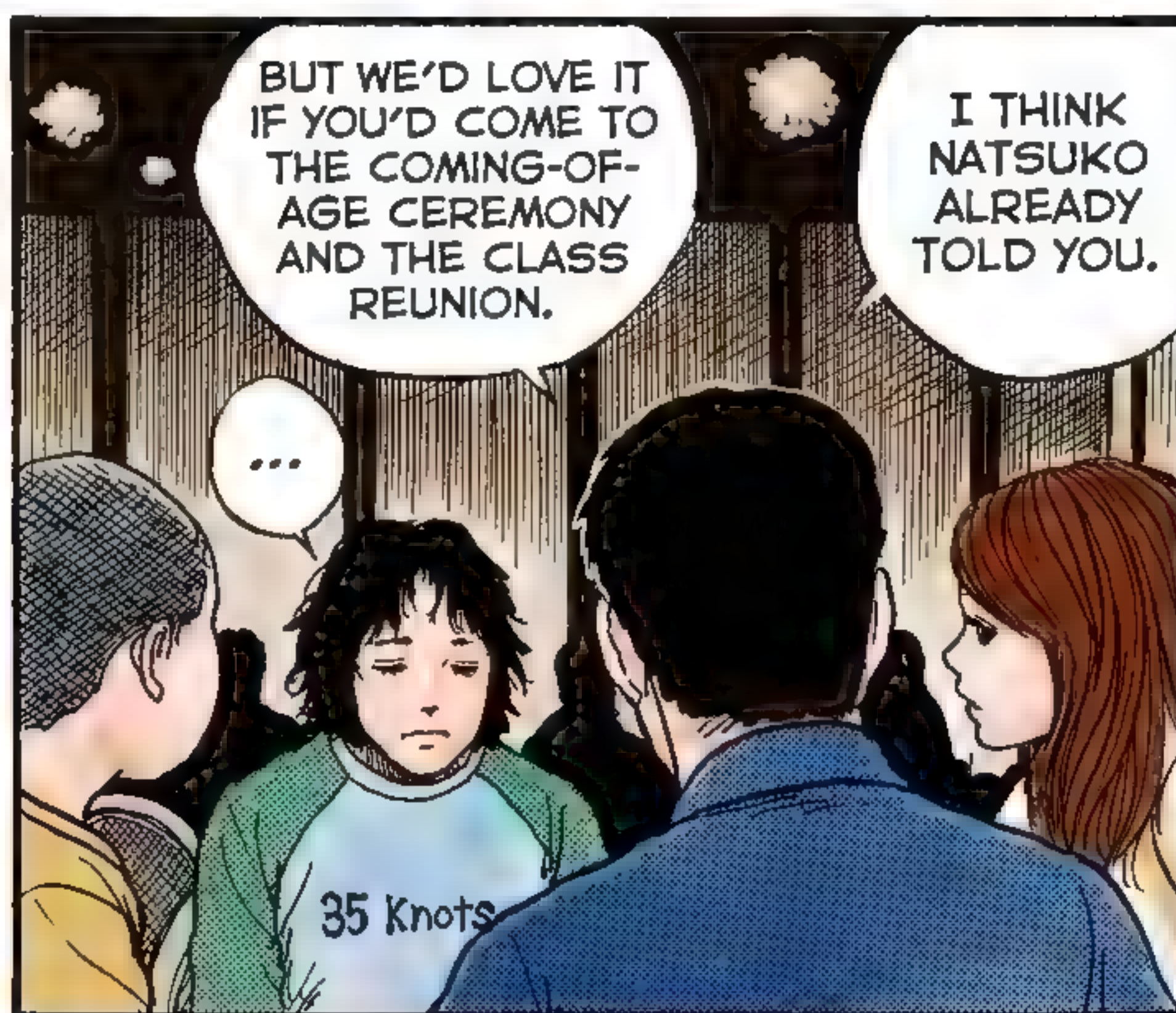
IT'S BEEN FOREVER, MICHIO.

AAH...

I'M KEISUKE KASAGI. YOU DIDN'T FORGET, RIGHT?

I REMEMBER YOU. ALL OF YOU.

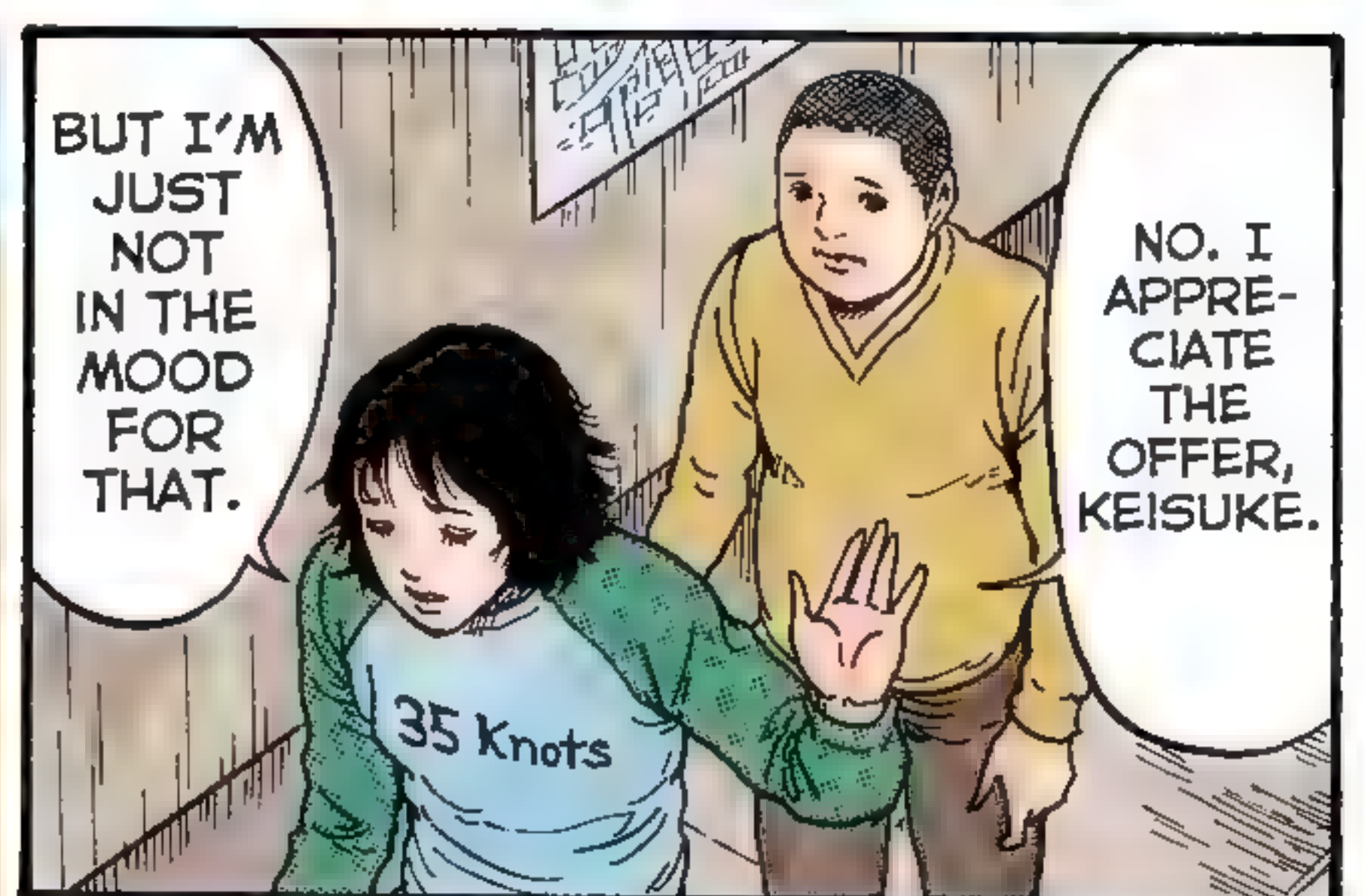
YOU GOTTA COME! YOU CAN'T STAY LOCKED UP IN YOUR HOUSE FOREVER, Y'KNOW?

HEY, KEISUKE. DON'T SAY IT LIKE THAT. IT'S RUDE.

I THINK NATSUKO ALREADY TOLD YOU.

BUT WE'D LOVE IT IF YOU'D COME TO THE COMING-OF-AGE CEREMONY AND THE CLASS REUNION.

...

35 Knots

I TOTALLY GET HOW YOU FEEL, MICHIO.
I MEAN ...
ONCE YOU'RE DONE WITH SCHOOL, YOU HAVE TO DEAL WITH BOSSES AND ANNOYING COWORKERS AND ALL THAT.
I'D MUCH RATHER SIT AND READ BY MYSELF THAN BE GROUND DOWN.
C'MON, NORIYUKI, DON'T TALK LIKE THAT.
YEAH. NOT IN FRONT OF YOUR FUTURE WIFE.
35 Knots
COOL IT, KEISUKE.
OH... RIGHT.
MICHIO, WE'RE ACTUALLY GETTING MARRIED NEXT YEAR.
IT'S KIND OF EMBAR-RASSING.
WOW... YOU ARE?
CON-GRATS.
UM...
OKAY, I'M GONNA HEAD OUT.

Rest Café
Ren Ren
HEY, MICHIO! WAIT UP!
Rest Café
Ren Ren
Café
35 Knots
DON'T GO RUNNING OUT ON US. YOU FREE TONIGHT?
THERE'S THIS GROUP DATE, BUT WE'RE SHORT A GUY. AND I CAN'T EXACTLY ASK NORIYUKI.
WHY DON'T YOU COME?
...
NO. I APPRECIATE THE OFFER, KEISUKE.
BUT I'M JUST NOT IN THE MOOD FOR THAT.
35 Knots
...
CHATTER
CLAMOR

IS IT MAYBE THOSE PEOPLE WHO WENT MISSING THE OTHER DAY?

...

DIDN'T THEY FIND THE BODIES OF THAT MURDERED COUPLE LOOKING THE SAME WAY?

BUT THIS IS JUST GRUESOME. THE POLICE STILL AREN'T HERE?

AH ?!

VRRRRRRK

VRRRRK

WHO WOULD *DO* THIS?!

WHO ON EARTH...

VRRRRRRRRR

PLAP

g. We're
iends!
t's all hold
ands! Reach
out from the heart!
Billions Alone Club

Come together!
Everyone, come
together! Being
by yourself's
boring. We're
all friends!
Let's all hold
hands! Reach
out from the heart!
Billions Alone Club

TAK TAK TAK TAK

Michio

Anz>About the murder victims sewn together
Anz>Billions Alone. Lately what I've heard
Michio>What kind of rumor?
Anz>There's a weird rumor going around.
Michio>The thing on the radio, and then
about that.

TAK TAK TAK TAK TAK TAK

Anz>There's a weird rumor going around
Michio>The thing on the radio, and the
Anz>Oh, I know about that.
Michio>By the way, do you know about
Anz>Thanks.
Michio>Good luck.

...

IT'S HORIE. YOU KNOW, THE GIRL FROM THE OTHER DAY.

MICHIO, ARE YOU AWAKE? THE PHONE'S FOR YOU.

the murder victims sewn together.
Alone. Lately what I've heard

...

HELLO?
MICHIO? SORRY TO CALL SO SUDDENLY.
I JUST WANTED TO ASK YOU SOMETHING.
IT'S ABOUT KEISUKE, ACTUALLY.
HE'S BEEN MISSING SINCE THAT NIGHT. ALONG WITH EVERYONE ELSE ON THE GROUP DATE.
HUH?!
WHAT?!
A FEW DAYS LATER, KEISUKE KASAGI...
...WAS FOUND IN THE MOUNTAINS FAR FROM WHERE HE DISAPPEARED, HIS BODY SEWN TO THE OTHERS ON THE GROUP DATE.

MISSING PERSONS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY...

...ARE BEING DISCOVERED ONE AFTER ANOTHER AS PART OF "GROUP CORPSES."

NEWS 9:00

IN MANY CASES, PEOPLE SUDDENLY DISAPPEAR AFTER MEETING IN ONE PLACE AS A GROUP.

THE ENTIRE GROUP IS THEN LATER FOUND SEWN TOGETHER INTO A SINGLE CORPSE.

THE FACTS EACH TIME ARE SIMILAR, SUCH AS THE TIGHT STITCHING WITH FISHING LINE.

GIVEN THAT VICTIMS ARE BEING FOUND IN ALL REGIONS, THE PROBABILITY THAT THIS IS AN ORGANIZED CRIME...

TAK TAK TAK TAK

TAK TAK TAK TAK

Sign up for free to get started.

NAME

□ Anz>It's a rumor at best...
□ Anz>Basically, places with lots o
□ Anz>And everyone who comes togeth
□ Anz>Wherever people group, Billic
□ Anz>They'll be talking about it s
□ Michio>The media's not touching

places with lots of people
one who comes together
Wherever people group, Bil
talking about it soon enou

...

PLACES WITH LOTS OF PEOPLE ARE DANGEROUS...

BEEP
BEEP
OH... HELLO?
NATSUKO?
IT'S MICHIO.
GROUP CORPSE REMAINS
OH, MICHIO? HI... WHAT'S WRONG?
ACTUALLY, IT'S ABOUT THE REUNION.
OH. ARE YOU COMING?
NO, THAT'S NOT IT... IT MIGHT BE A GOOD IDEA TO CANCEL IT.
WHAT?! CANCEL?
THERE'S A RUMOR THAT WHOEVER'S BEHIND ALL THESE DISAPPEARANCES AND MURDERS LATELY IS TARGETING GROUPS.
SO IT MIGHT BE DANGEROUS TO HAVE A REUNION.
NO WAY! REALLY?! THAT'S...

I MEAN, IT'S NOT FOR SURE OR ANYTHING, BUT...

LOOK. I REALLY WANT TO HAVE THIS REUNION, ALSO AS A MEMORIAL FOR KEISUKE NOW THAT HE'S GONE.

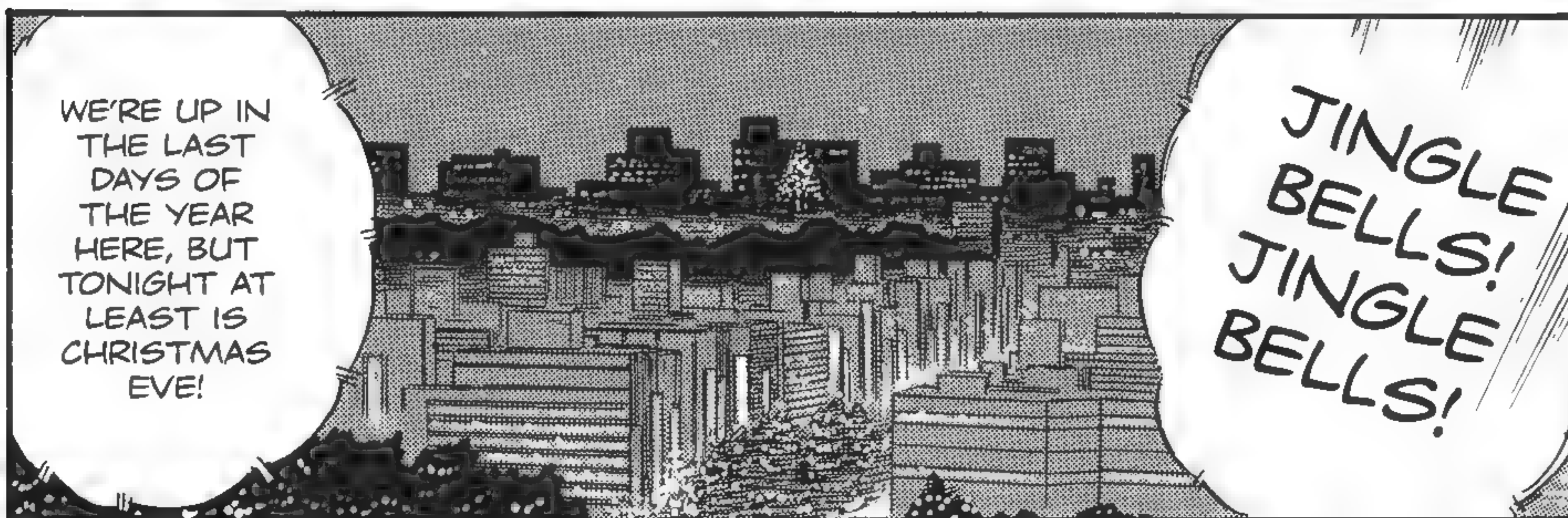
I WANT YOU TO COME, TOO, MICHIO.

OH. RIGHT. I GUESS... MAKES SENSE.

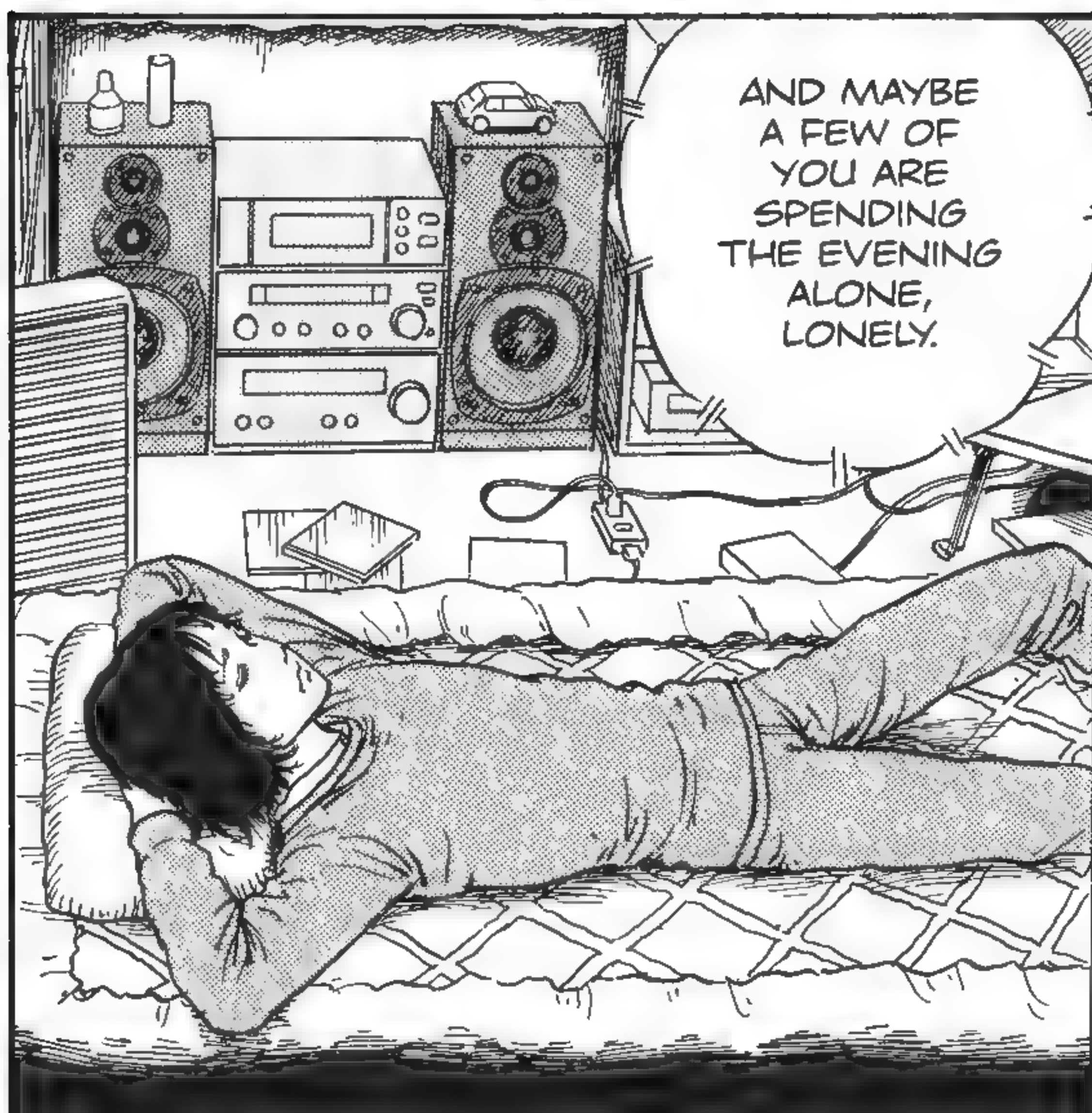
YEAH. I'LL THINK ABOUT IT.

...

BEEP

JINGLE BELLS! JINGLE BELLS!

WE'RE UP IN THE LAST DAYS OF THE YEAR HERE, BUT TONIGHT AT LEAST IS CHRISTMAS EVE!

HOW ARE YOU SPENDING THE NIGHT THIS YEAR? WITH YOUR LOVER, JUST THE TWO OF YOU?

OR PARTYING WITH YOUR FRIENDS?

AND MAYBE A FEW OF YOU ARE SPENDING THE EVENING ALONE, LONELY.

HUH?

KWEEEE EEEN EEN

BWEE BWEE WEEEE

KWEEEEN

WELL, HOW ABOUT A SONG? JOHN LENNON'S "HAPPY XMAS"...

IT'S THAT WEIRD SHOW AGAIN ...

THIS AGAIN?

LET'S ALL HOLD HANDS ...

WE'RE ALL FRIENDS ... ALL FRIENDS ...

BEING BY YOUR-SELF'S BORING ...

COME TOGETH-ER... COME TOGETH-ER...

KWEEEEEN...

BILLIONS ALONE... BILLIONS ALONE...

LET'S ALL HOLD HANDS LIKE FRIENDS ...

EVERY-ONE, COME TOGETH-ER...

BEING BY YOUR-SELF'S BORING...

BILLIONS ALONE... BILLIONS ALONE...

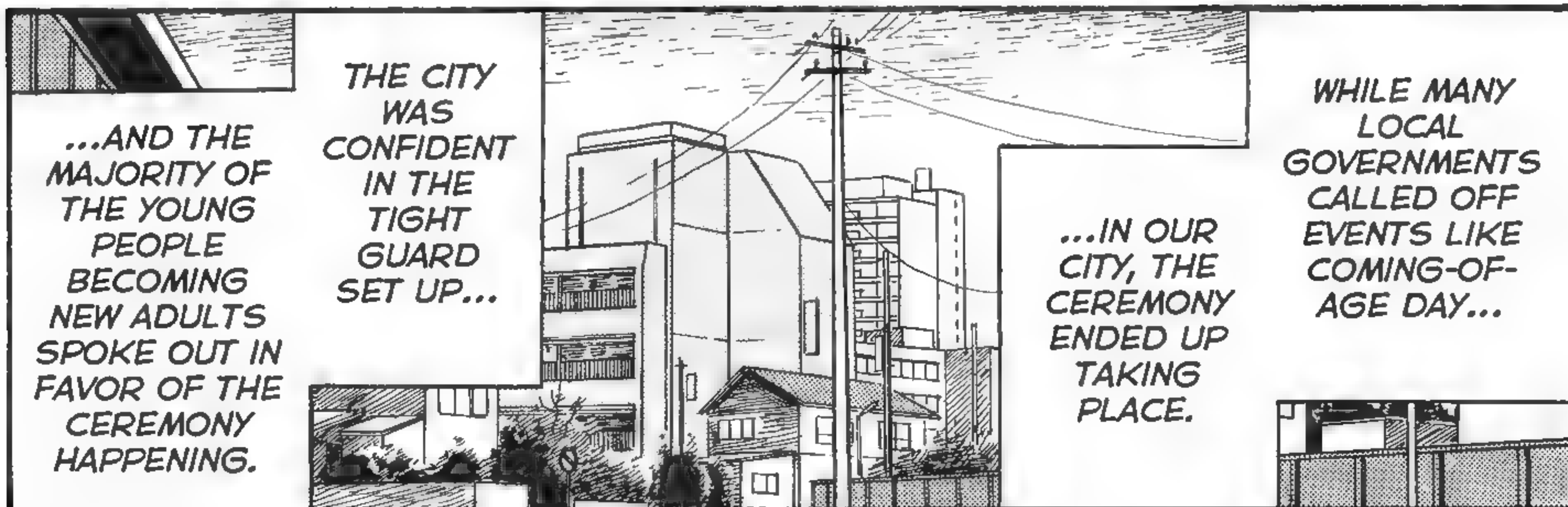
THE NEXT DAY ...

AAAH! THIS IS TERRIBLE!

REACH OUT FROM THE HEART...

WE'RE ALL FRIENDS ...

THIS GROUP HAS PREVIOUSLY DISTRIBUTED A LARGE NUMBER OF LEAFLETS VIA AIRPLANE AND REPEATEDLY HIJACKED THE AIRWAVES.
AND HERE WE SEE A PARTICULAR ORGANIZATION COMING TO THE FOREFRONT.
THEY CALL THEMSELVES THE "BILLIONS ALONE CLUB."
THE SITUATION IS EXTREMELY SERIOUS. THE MOSTLY YOUNG PEOPLE...
...WHO WENT MISSING ON CHRISTMAS EVE FROM VARIOUS AREAS OF THE COUNTRY WERE LATER FOUND AS GROUP CORPSES!
AT PRESENT, ALL WE CAN SAY IS THAT BILLIONS ALONE IS TARGETING GATHERINGS OF ANY KIND.
POLICE AND PUBLIC SECURITY HAVE BOTH SHOWN GREAT INTEREST AND STARTED TO INVESTIGATE, BUT THE TRUTH ABOUT THE GROUP REMAINS A MYSTERY.
IMPOSSIBLE TO THINK SO MANY COULD BE VICTIMIZED WITHOUT EVEN ONE OF THEM FIGHTING BACK.
IT'S ALSO CURIOUS THAT THE VICTIMS WERE NOT OBVIOUSLY INJURED, NOR DID THEY SHOW ANY SIGNS OF RESISTING.
BUT THAT SAID, NO MATTER HOW LARGE BILLIONS ALONE MIGHT BE...
...IS IT REALLY POSSIBLE TO CARRY OUT SUCH A LARGE-SCALE AND UNIQUE CRIME OVER SUCH A BROAD AREA WITHOUT DRAWING ANYONE'S ATTENTION?

I FEEL AS THOUGH IT IS A POWER THAT SURPASSES HUMAN KNOWLEDGE.
I BELIEVE BILLIONS ALONE IS IN FACT A UFO–THIS HAS TO BE THE WORK OF ALIENS, DOESN'T IT?
AT ANY RATE, WE'LL NEED TO PROCEED WITH CAUTION.
BEING IN A GROUP IS DANGEROUS IN AND OF ITSELF NOW.
WHILE MANY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS CALLED OFF EVENTS LIKE COMING-OF-AGE DAY...
...IN OUR CITY, THE CEREMONY ENDED UP TAKING PLACE.
THE CITY WAS CONFIDENT IN THE TIGHT GUARD SET UP...
...AND THE MAJORITY OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE BECOMING NEW ADULTS SPOKE OUT IN FAVOR OF THE CEREMONY HAPPENING.

THE CEREMONY WILL BEGIN SHORTLY, SO PLEASE MAKE YOUR WAY INSIDE.

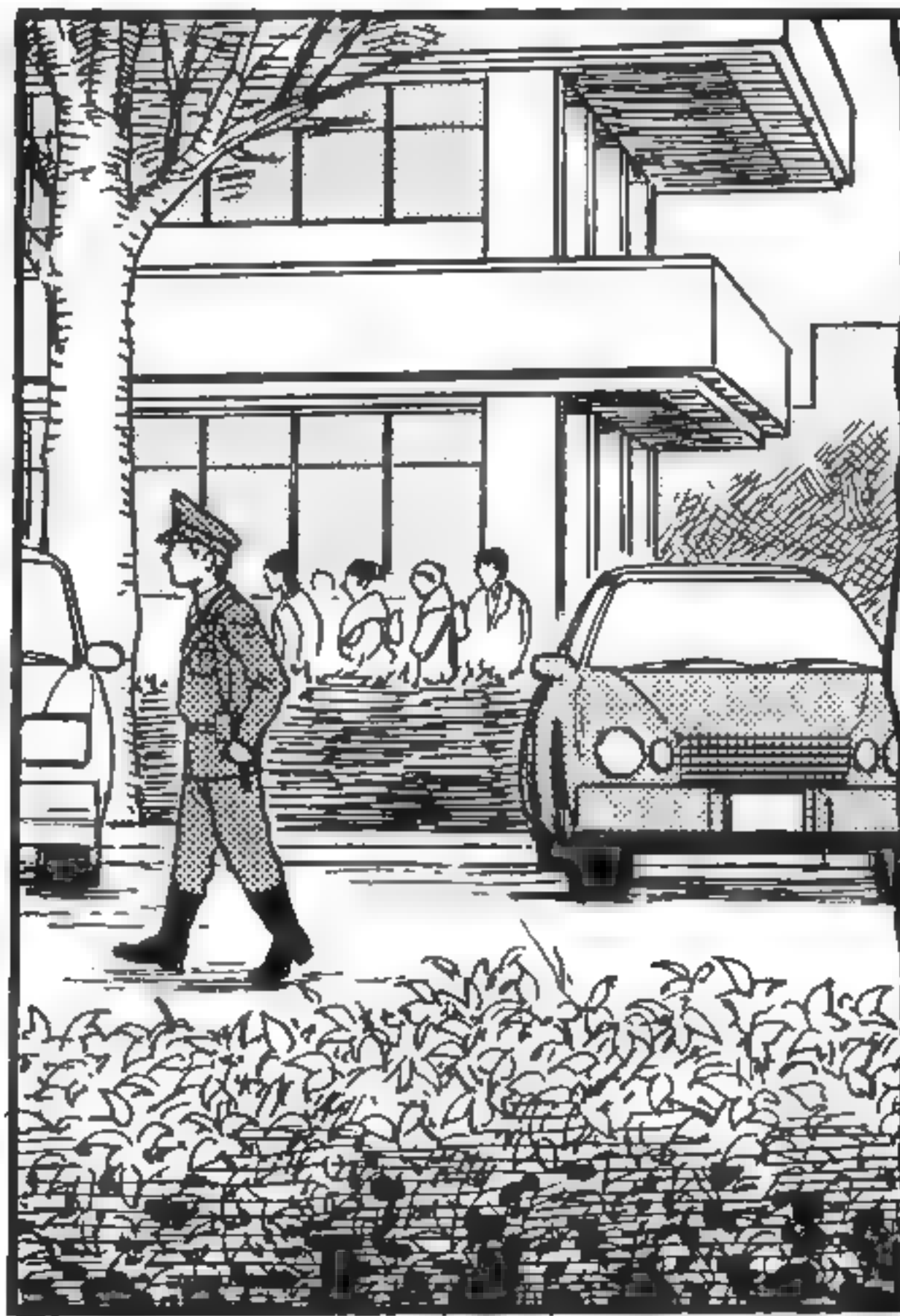
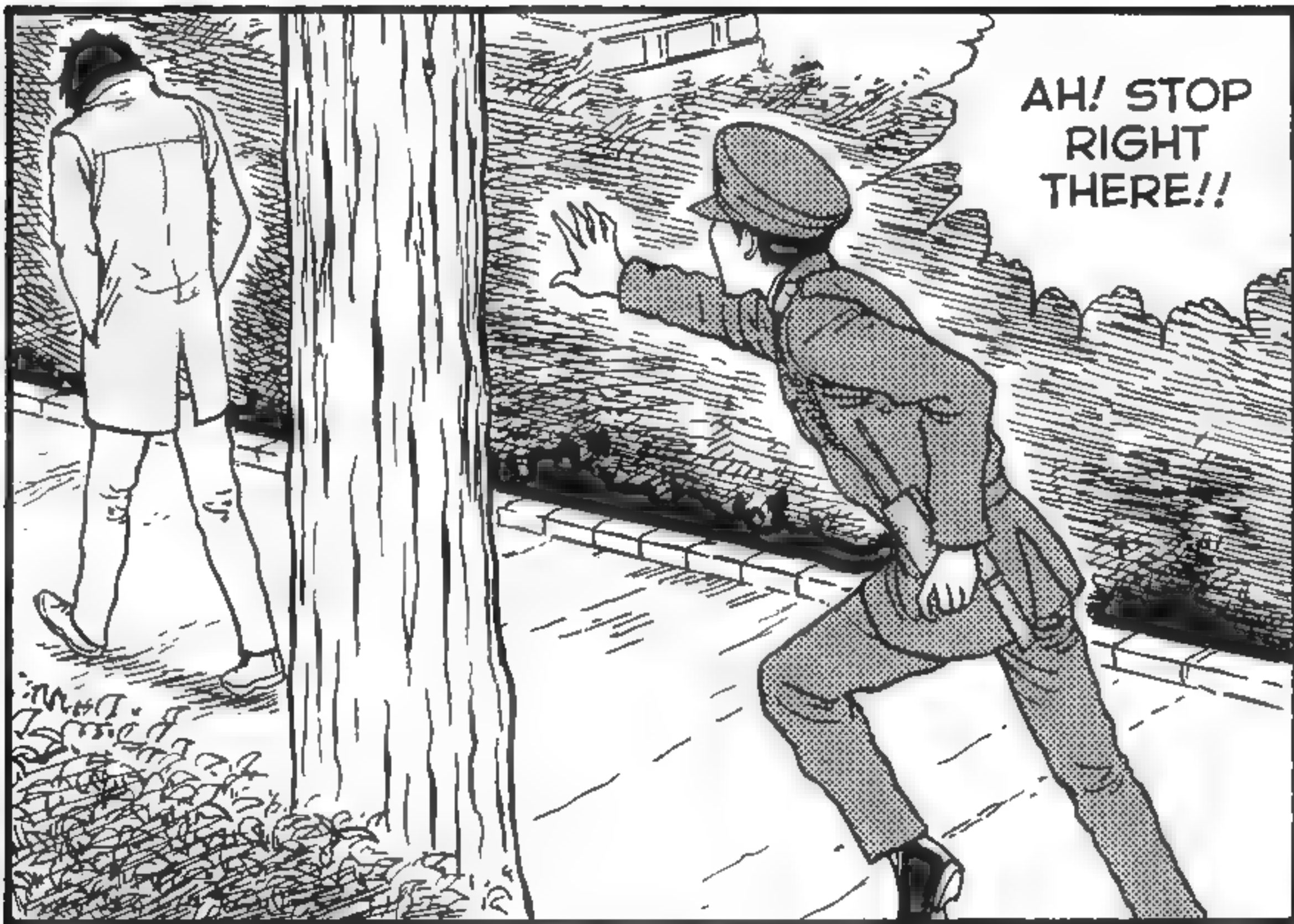
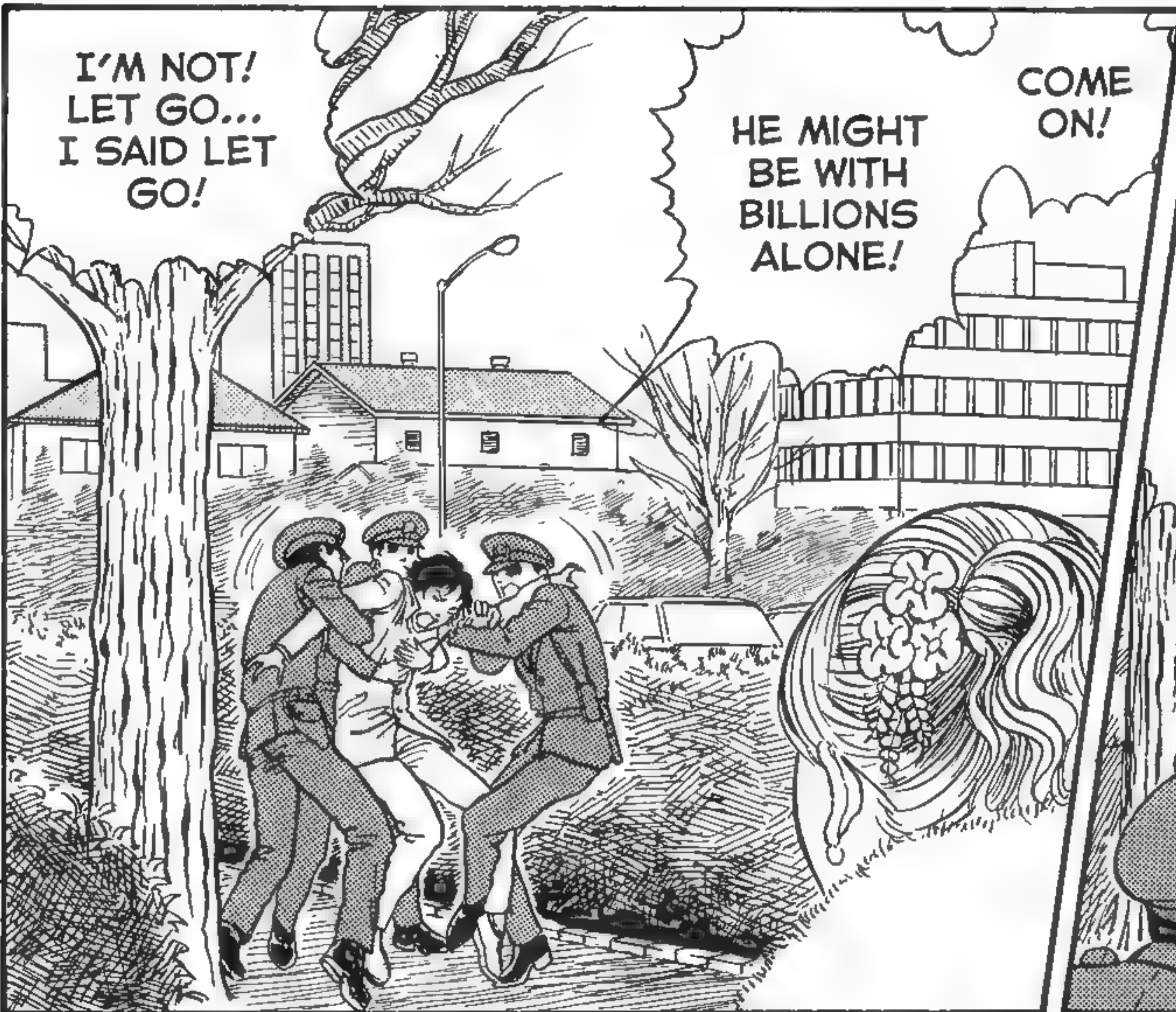
HOW ARE YOU?

EEE! IT'S BEEN AGES!

YOU!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE?!

WHERE'S NATSUKO?

I'M WORRIED.

AH! STOP RIGHT THERE!!
WHY ARE YOU RUNNING?!
WHO ARE YOU?!
I-I'M NOBODY.
YOU'RE SUSPICIOUS. COME ON! TELL ME WHAT YOU'RE DOING HERE!
L-LET GO!! I'M A NEW ADULT!
WHY WOULD A NEW ADULT BE HIDING BEHIND A TREE?!
COME ON!
HE MIGHT BE WITH BILLIONS ALONE!
I'M NOT! LET GO... I SAID LET GO!

WHAT'S GOING ON, MICHIO?

OH!

NATSUKO!

DO YOU KNOW THIS MAN?

YES. HE WAS MY CLASSMATE IN JUNIOR HIGH.

WHAT? SO YOU REALLY *ARE* A NEW ADULT?

WHY ARE YOU STANDING OUT HERE INSTEAD OF GOING INSIDE?

OFFICER, HE'S A VERY SHY PERSON.

HE'S NOT GOOD WITH CROWDS. HE WAS TRYING TO DECIDE WHETHER HE SHOULD GO OR NOT.

HE'S DEFINITELY NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

IS THAT SO?

WELL THEN, GO INSIDE. THE CEREMONY'S STARTING.

OKAY, LET'S GO, MICHIO.

S-SURE.

THANKS, NATSUKO. YOU REALLY SAVED ME.

I'M NOT ONE TO TALK, EITHER.

THE YEAR'S JUST STARTED AND I'M ALREADY SHOWING UP LATE. IT TOOK A WHILE TO GET DRESSED.

AONO CITY COMING-OF-AGE CEREMONY

CONGRATULATIONS

OH?!

W-WHAT? THERE'S NO ONE HERE?

WHERE'D EVERYONE GO?!

I-IT CAN'T BE...

A GROUP DISAP-PEARANCE ?!

NOOOOOOOOOOOO!!

IN A MERE INSTANT, THE 500 AND SOME PEOPLE TAKING PART IN THE CEREMONY HAD VANISHED.

NORIYUKIIIIIII! NORIYUKIIIIII! WHERE ARE YOUUUUU?!

NOOOOOO!!

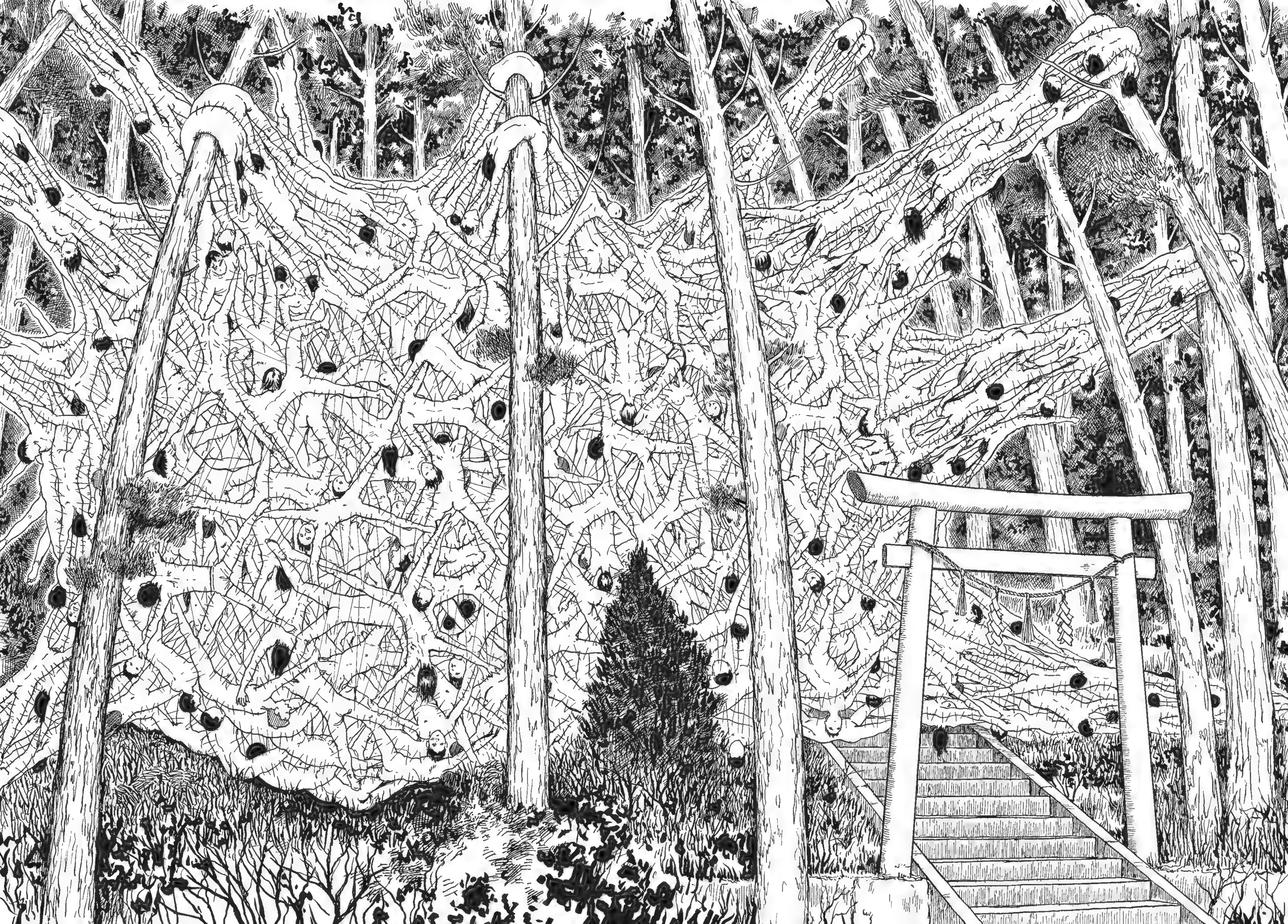
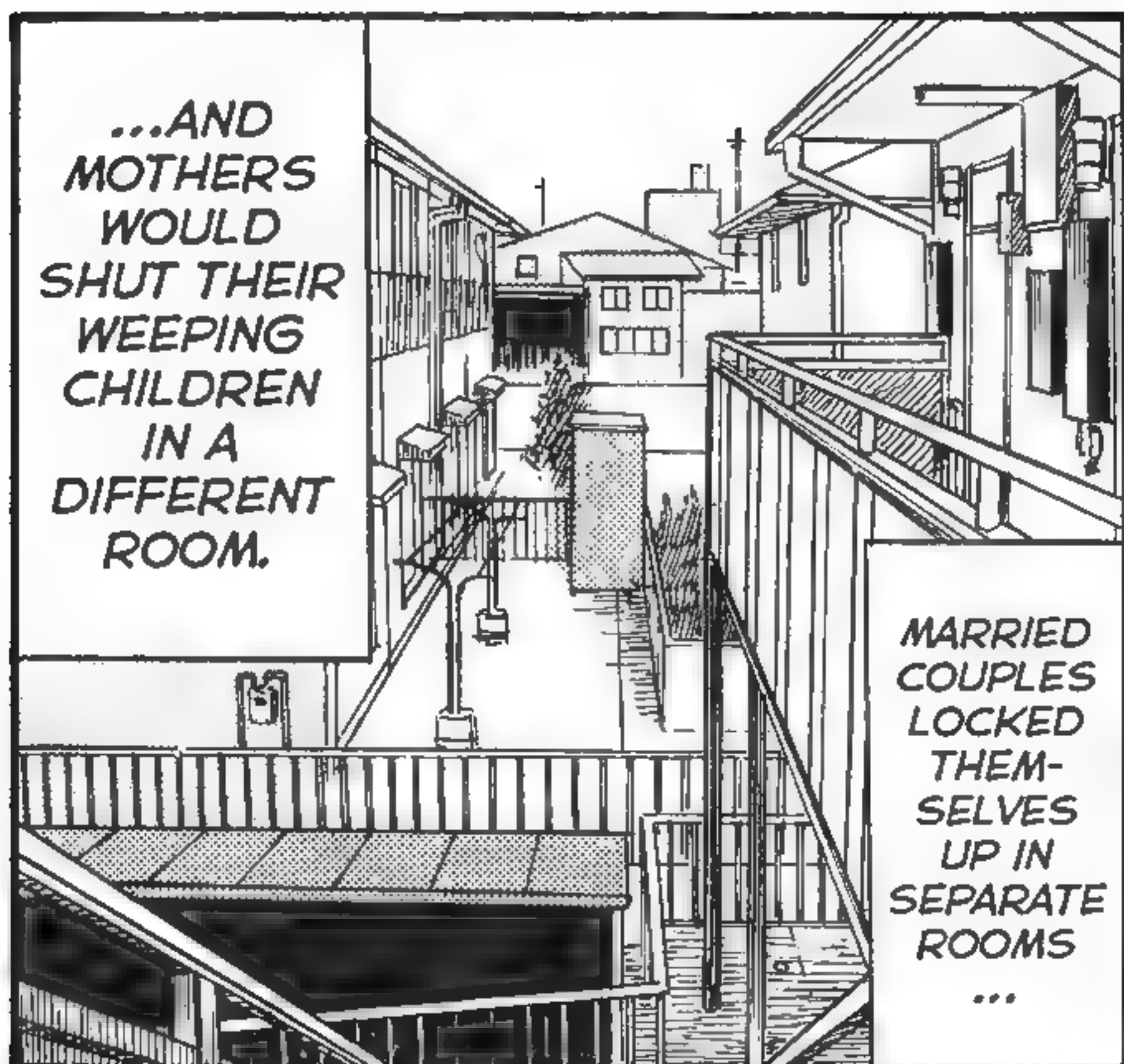
IT SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POS-SIBLE.

N-NATSUKO... HANG ON...

AND THEN, A FEW DAYS LATER ...

AFTER THAT, PEOPLE STARTED AVOIDING OTHER PEOPLE...

...AND ENDED UP HOLED UP IN ROOMS ALL BY THEMSELVES.

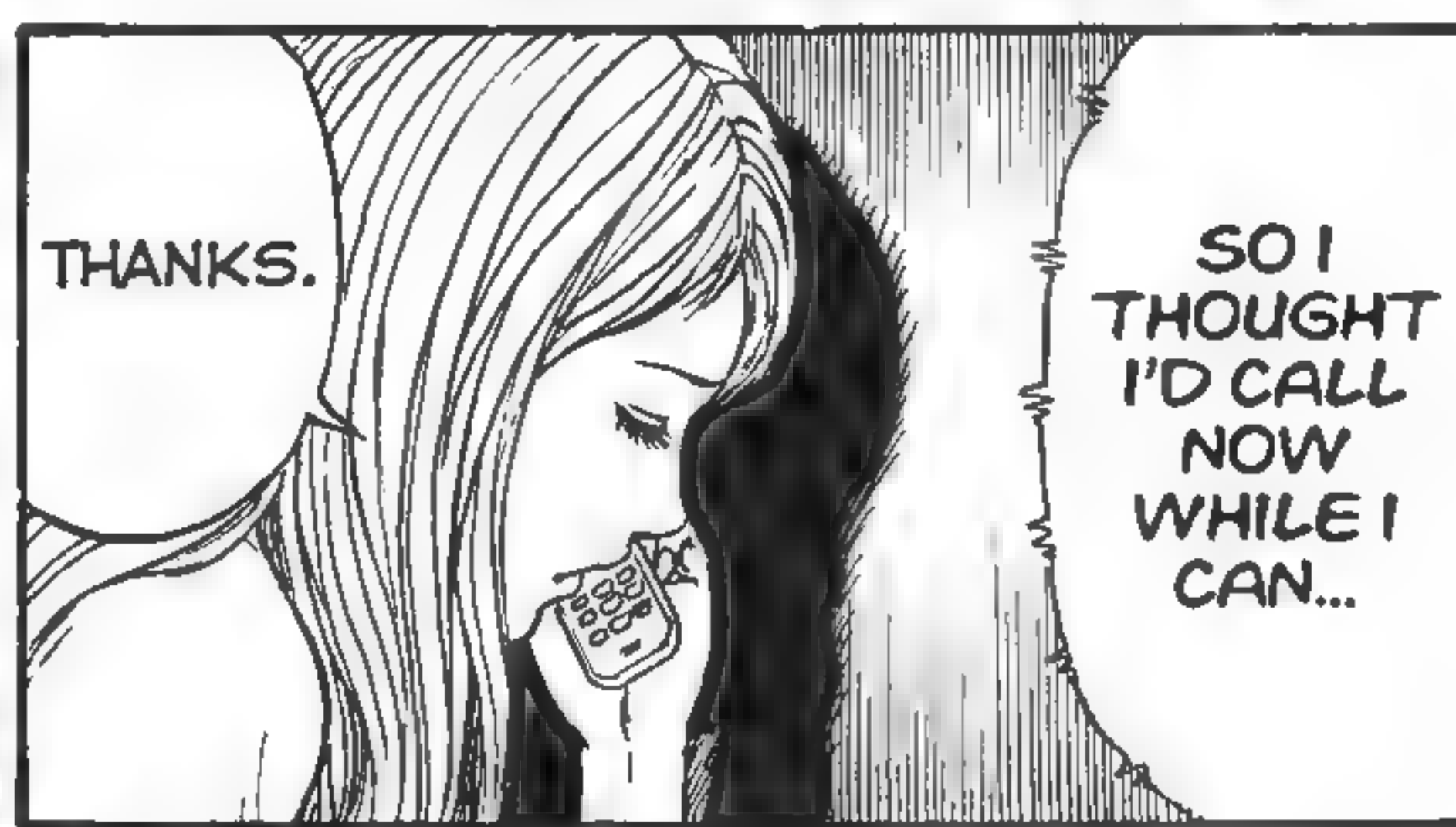
MARRIED COUPLES LOCKED THEMSELVES UP IN SEPARATE ROOMS ...

...AND MOTHERS WOULD SHUT THEIR WEEPING CHILDREN IN A DIFFERENT ROOM.

...

OH... HELLO?

NATSUKO?

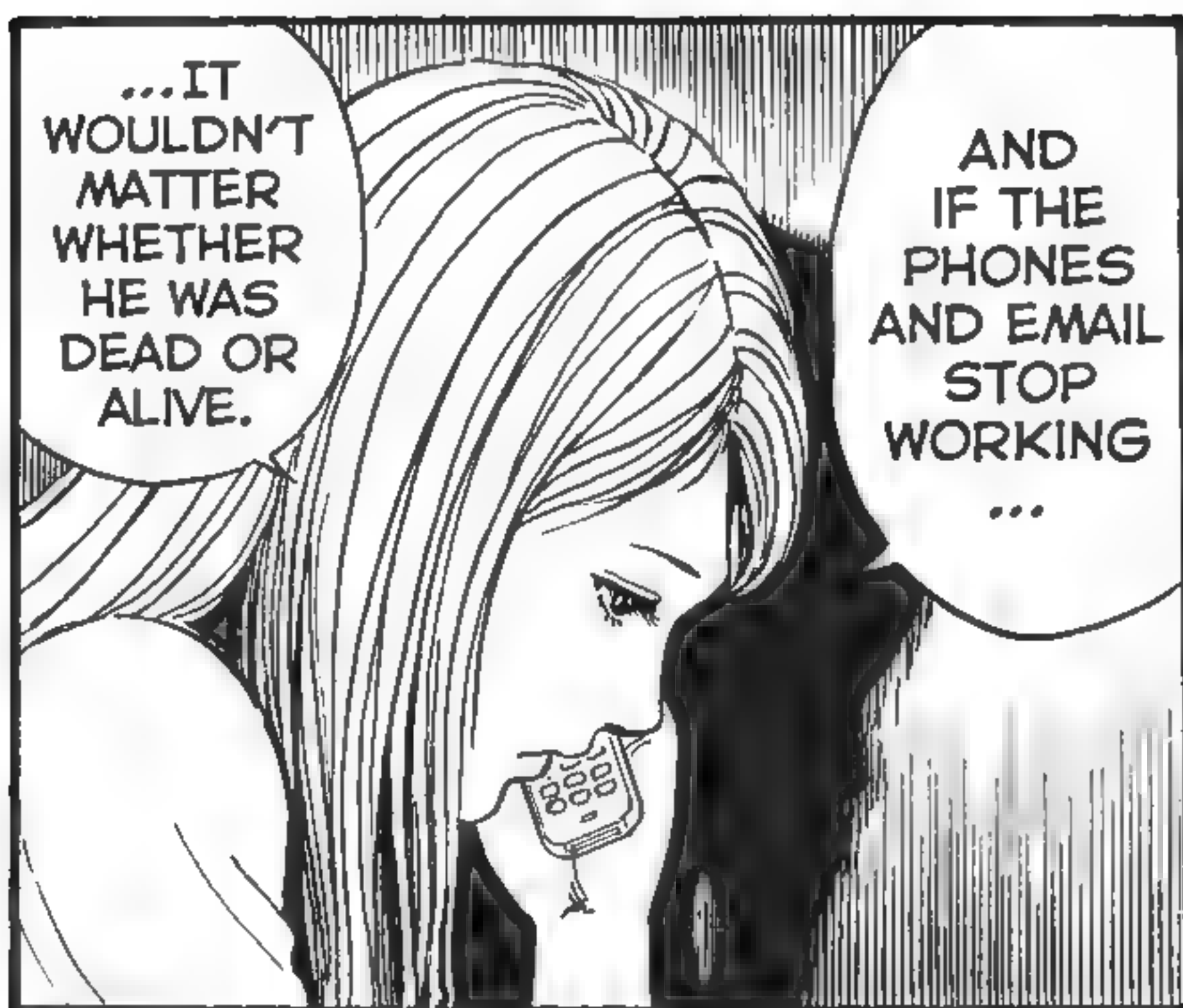
I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU'D CALMED DOWN A BIT...

UM. EVERYTHING IN JAPAN'S A MESS RIGHT NOW, AND I DON'T KNOW WHEN THE PHONES'LL STOP WORKING.

SO I THOUGHT I'D CALL NOW WHILE I CAN...

THANKS.

I'M A LITTLE BETTER. BUT I CAN'T MOTIVATE MYSELF TO DO ANYTHING.

AND NORIYUKI'S GONE...

Album

...BUT IT'S WEIRD.
EVEN IF HE WERE STILL ALIVE, I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO SEE HIM.
AND IF THE PHONES AND EMAIL STOP WORKING...
...IT WOULDN'T MATTER WHETHER HE WAS DEAD OR ALIVE.
BUT I... I'M LONELY.
LOCKED UP IN A ROOM BY MYSELF, I'M SO LONELY... I WANT TO DIE.
N-NATSUKO. IF IT'S OKAY WITH YOU...
I'LL COME SEE YOU.
I THINK IT SHOULD BE OKAY IF IT'S FOR JUST A SHORT TIME.
REALLY? JUST YOU SAYING THAT MAKES ME HAPPY.
IF I COULD SEE YOU, MICHIO... I'D LIKE THAT.

MOM...

MOM, YOU AWAKE?

DON'T COME IN.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

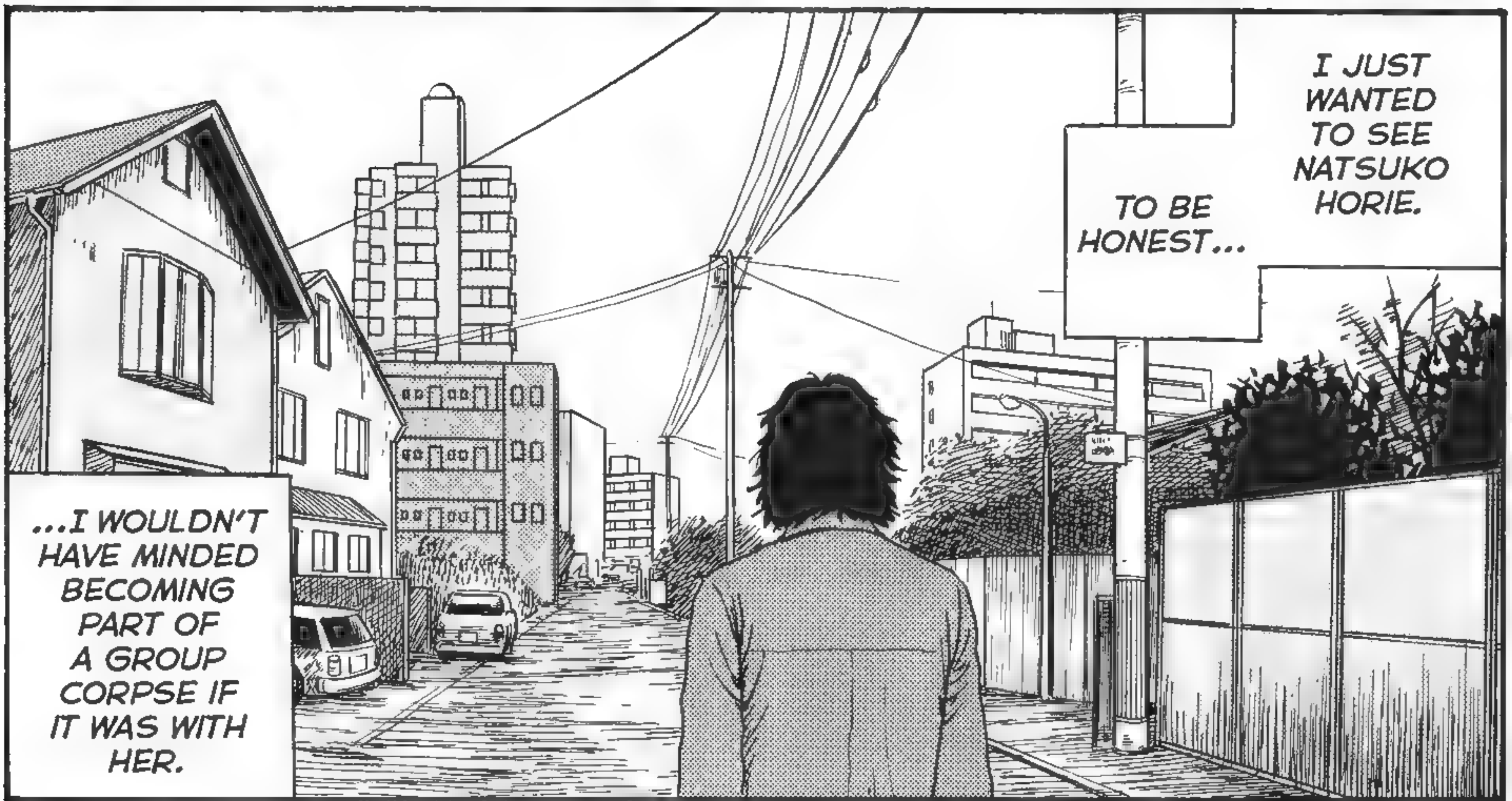
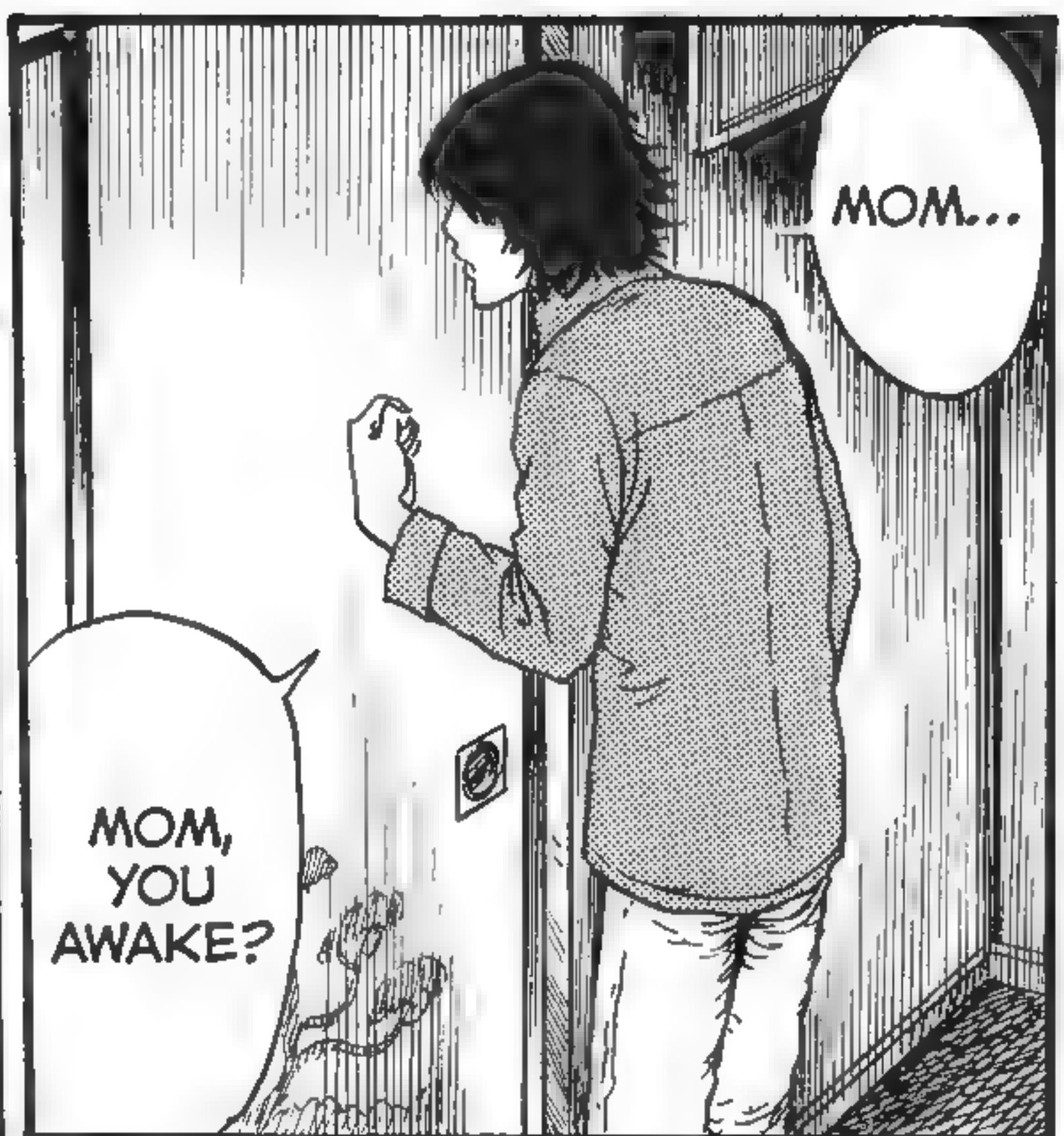
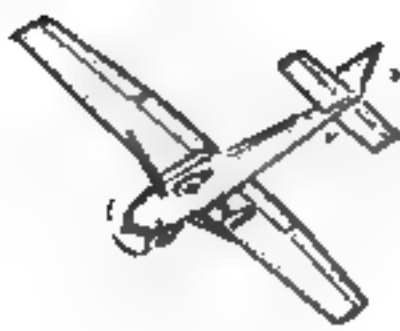
I'M GOING OUT FOR A BIT.

OH? WELL, BE CAREFUL ...

TO BE HONEST...

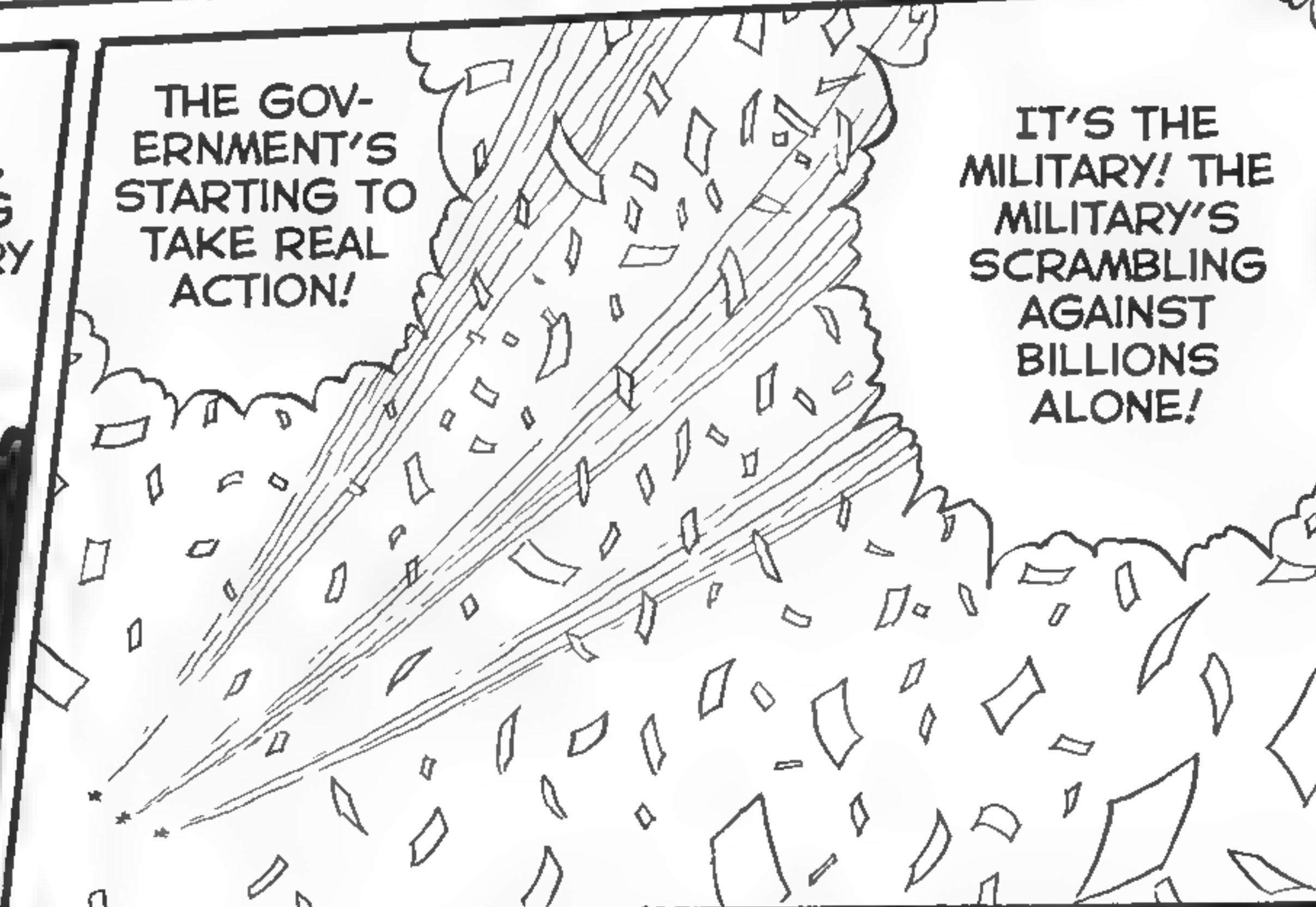
I JUST WANTED TO SEE NATSUKO HORIE.

...I WOULDN'T HAVE MINDED BECOMING PART OF A GROUP CORPSE IF IT WAS WITH HER.

THE CITY WAS SILENT.

VRRRRRRK

EVERYONE, COME TOGETHER...
VRRRRRRRR
COME TOGETHER... COME TOGETHER...
...
BEING BY YOUR-SELF'S BORING...
LET'S ALL HOLD HANDS...
WHRRRRR
ROAR

WHRRRRRRRRR

THERE'S NO WAY THE GOVERNMENT WOULD JUST STAND BY AND WATCH!

RIGHT... NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT!

THE GOVERNMENT'S STARTING TO TAKE REAL ACTION!

IT'S THE MILITARY! THE MILITARY'S SCRAMBLING AGAINST BILLIONS ALONE!

ONE MORE THING...

AND THEN... WHEN I SEE HER...

IT'S OKAY NOW!

I HAVE TO TELL HER!

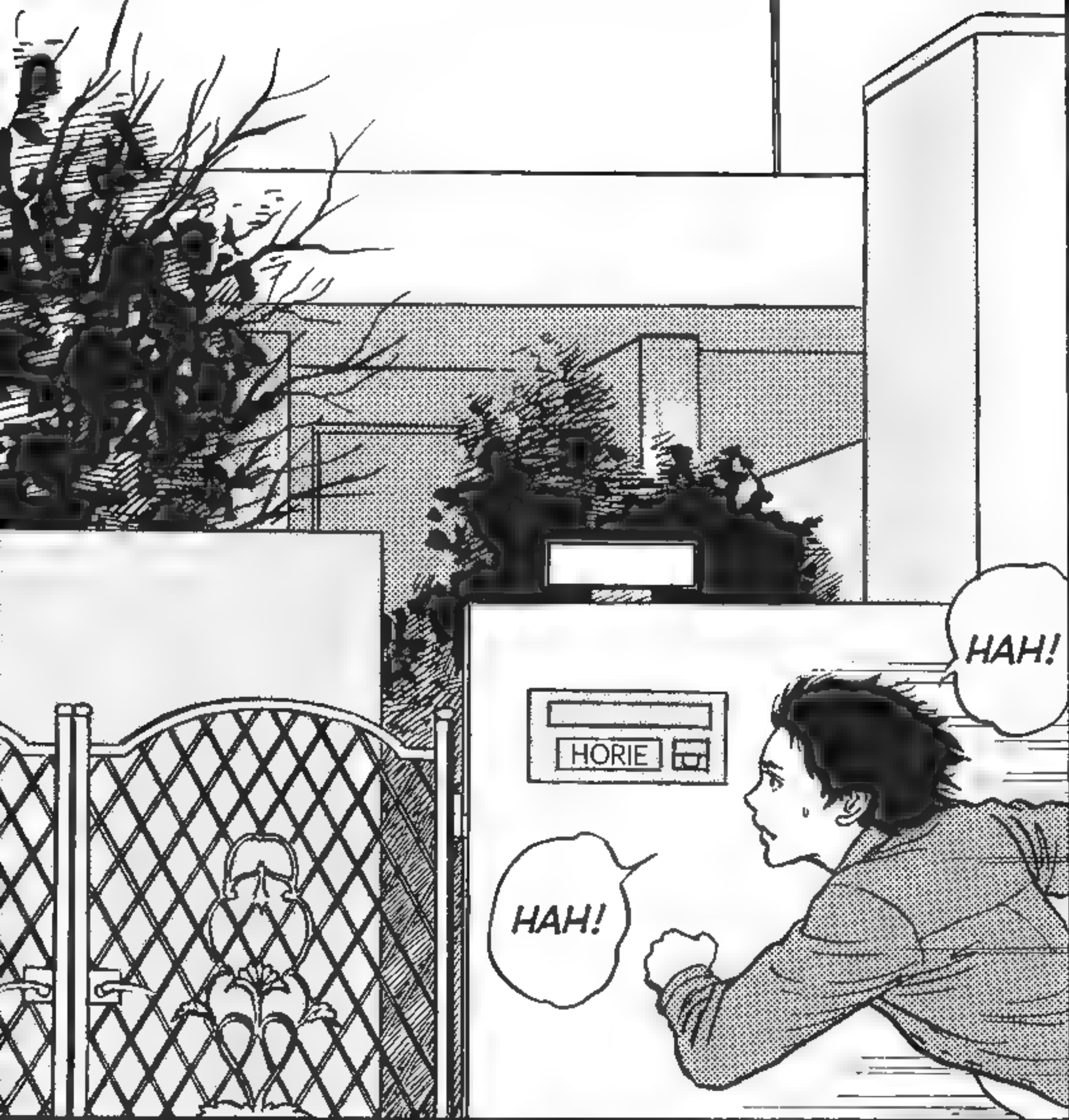
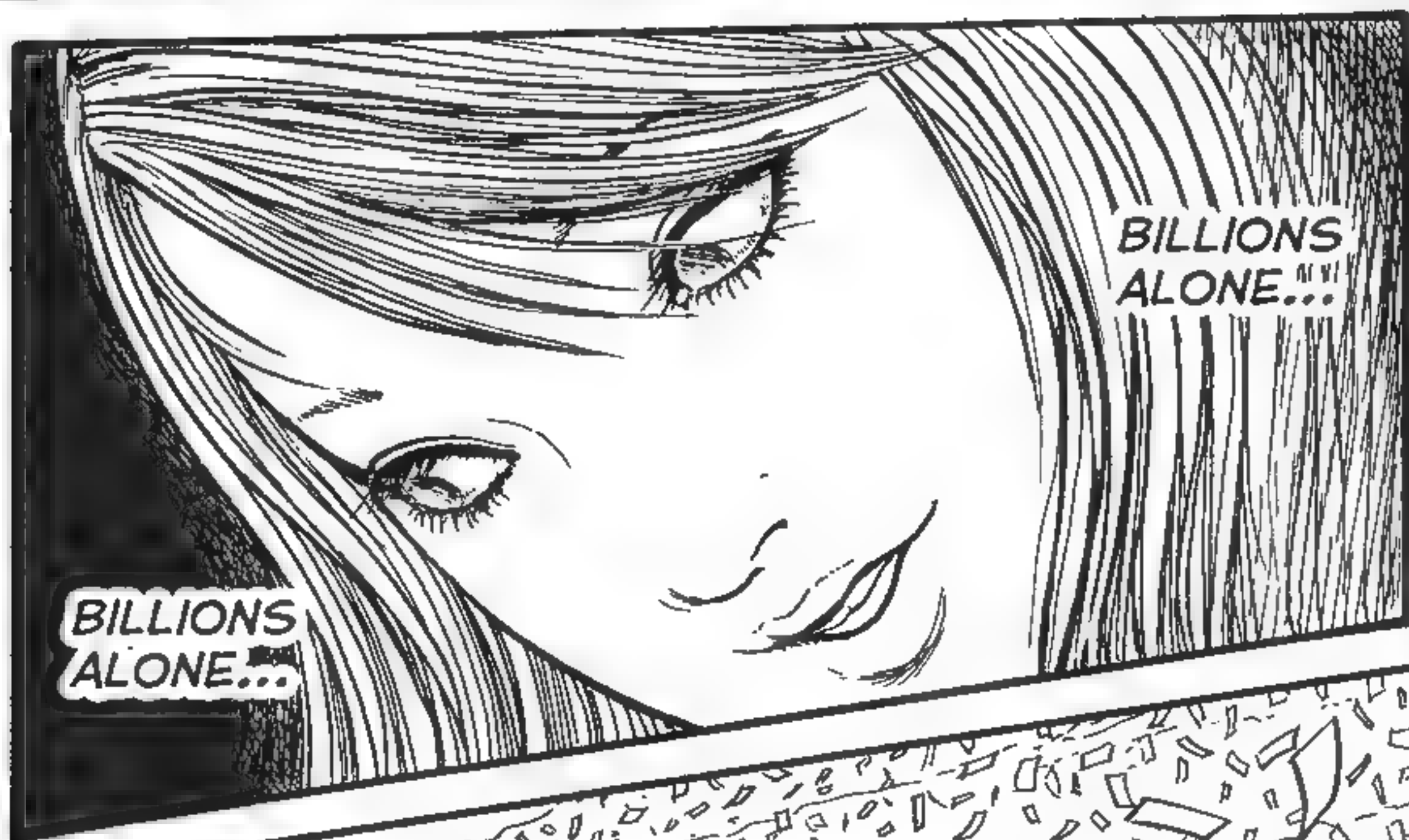
I'VE GOT ONE MORE THING TO TELL HER!
"I LIKE YOU"!
HAH!
HAH!
HORIE
NATSU-KO!
NATSUKO, IT'S ME!
KREE
NATSUKO!
COME TOGETH-ER...
COME TOGETH-ER...
EVERY-ONE...
COME TOGETH-ER...
BEING BY YOUR-SELF'S...
... BORING...
SNAP

DAD...

MOM...

LILY...

ALL TOGETHER...

N—

NATSUKO...

BILLIONS ALONE...

BILLIONS ALONE...

WHRRRRRR

THE HUMAN CHAIR

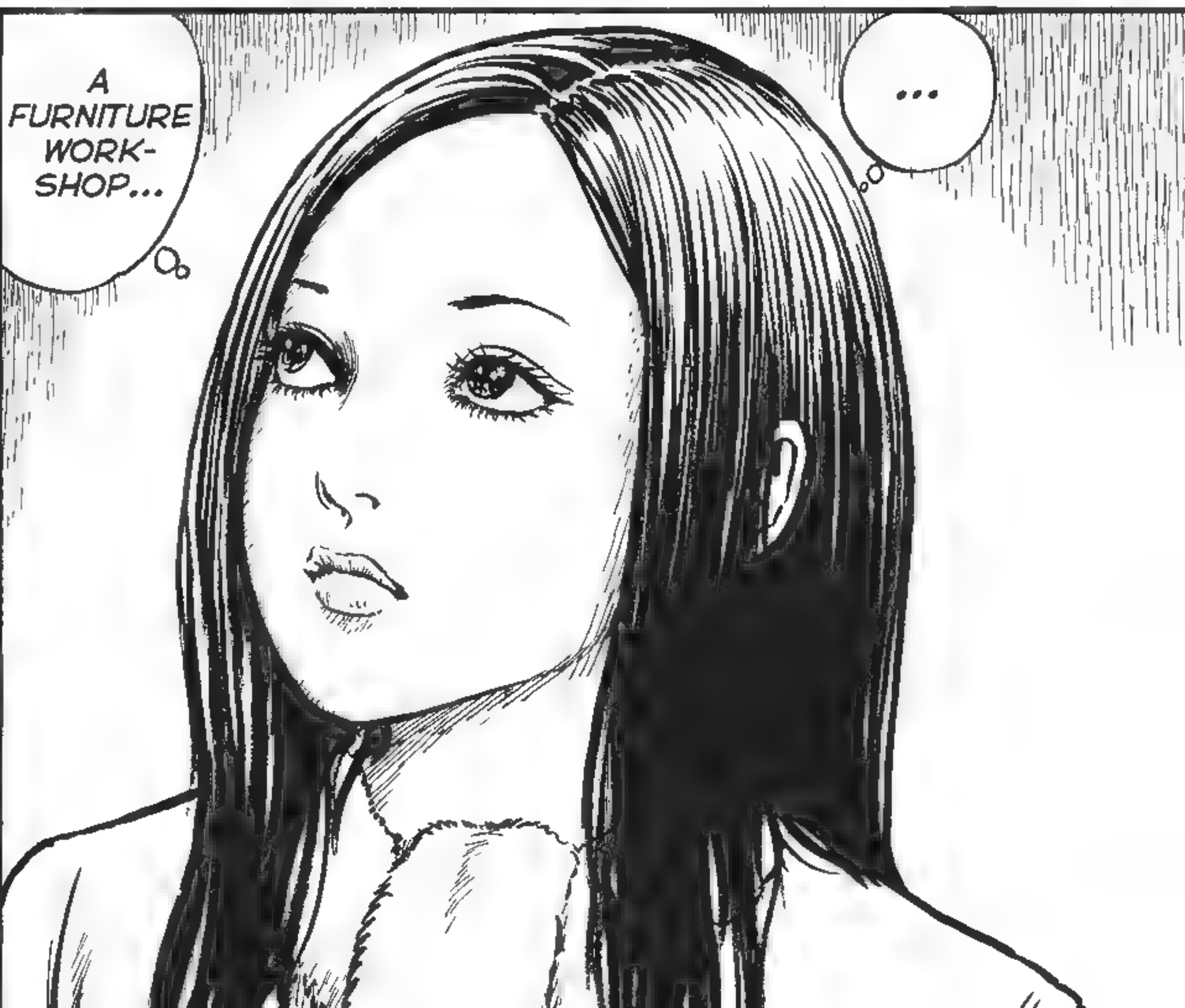
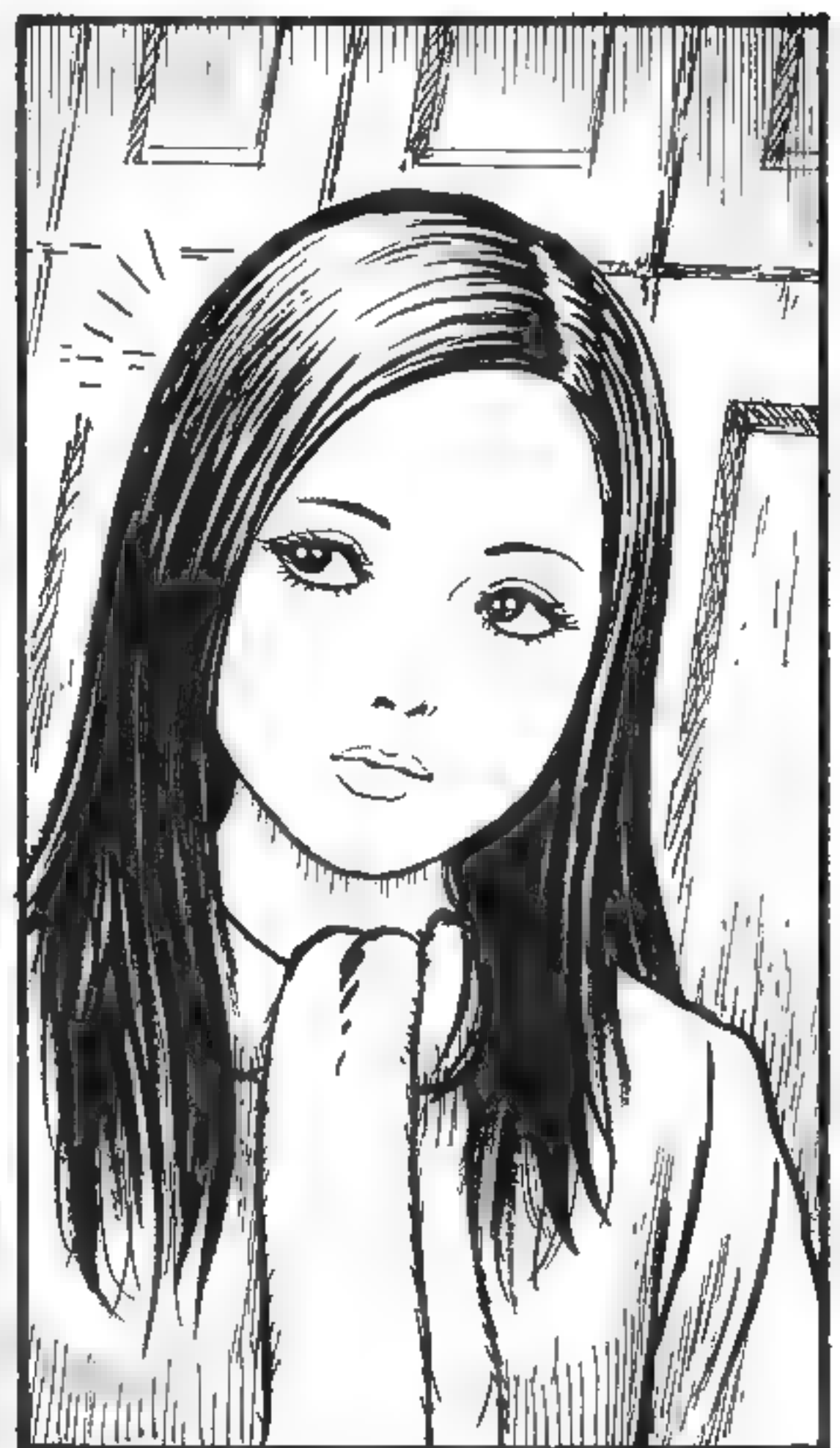
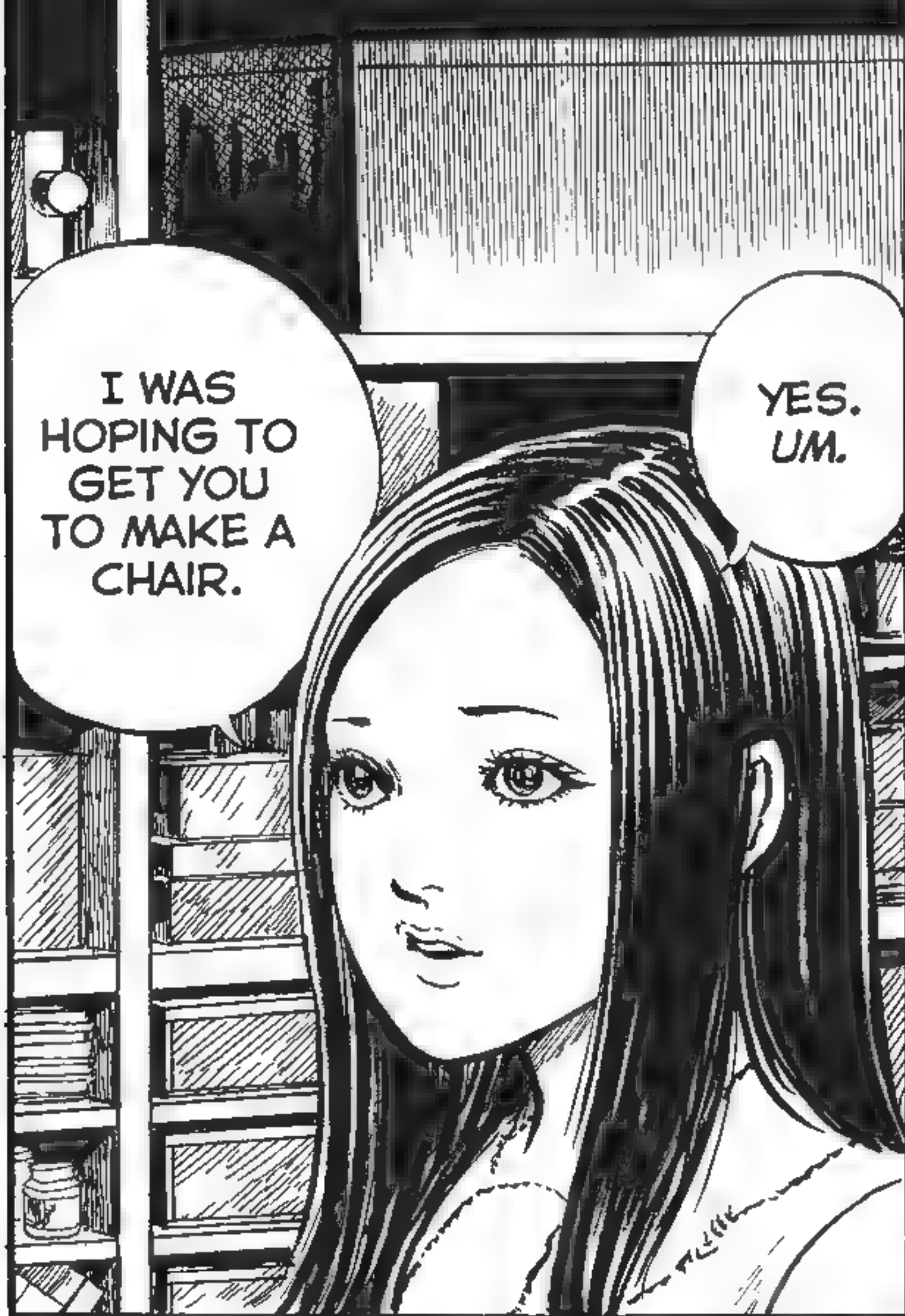
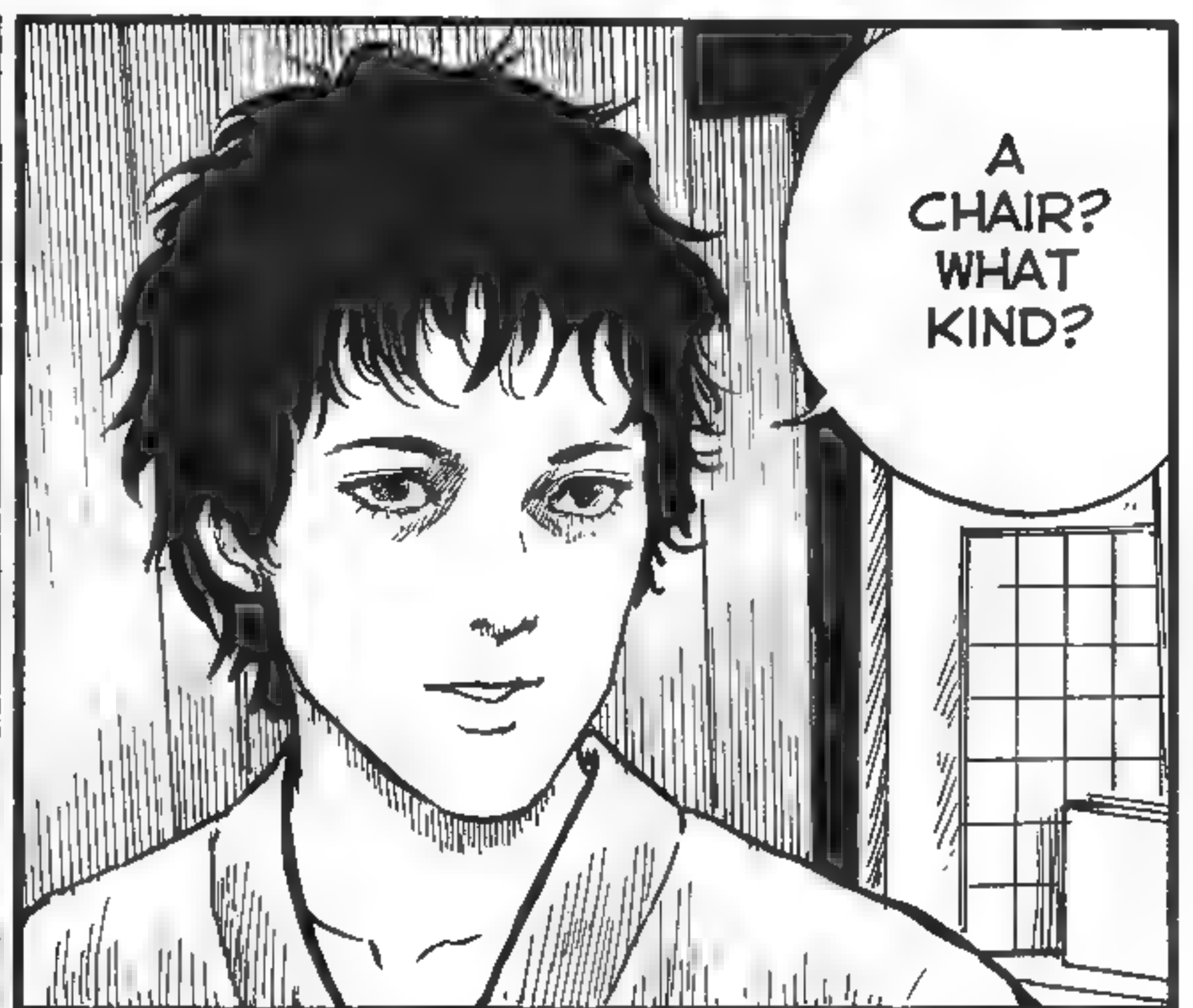
ORIGINAL STORY BY EDOGAWA RANPO

家具
工房 揺籃堂

* Furniture Workshop Yorando

KLATTER

A FURNITURE WORK-SHOP...

...

GOOD AFTERNOON.
DID YOU WANT TO PLACE AN ORDER?
YES. *UM.*
I WAS HOPING TO GET YOU TO MAKE A CHAIR.
A CHAIR? WHAT KIND?
YES, WELL...
SOMETHING SOFT, COMFORTABLE, STURDY.
WILL YOU BE USING IT FOR WORK?
OH, YES. I WORK AS A WRITER IN TOKYO.
AND YOU CAME ALL THIS WAY FOR A CHAIR?
NO, I JUST HAPPENED TO BE ON A BIT OF A HOLIDAY... I CAUGHT SIGHT OF YOUR SIGN.
AND IT REMINDED ME THAT MY CHAIR'S NOT REALLY SO COMFORTABLE.
揺籃
家具工房

I SEE. A GOOD CHAIR REALLY IS KEY, *HM?*

A CHAIR HAS TO SUPPORT A BODY FOR A LONG TIME.

IF YOU CHOOSE THE WRONG ONE, IT CAN LEAD TO HEALTH PROBLEMS.

IN THE MOST EXTREME CASE...

...A CHAIR CAN CHANGE A PERSON'S LIFE.

GOODNESS. THEIR LIFE?

YES. I KNOW OF A CASE LIKE THAT FROM A WHILE BACK.

IN THE TAISHO ERA, A CHAIR DID INDEED ALTER A CERTAIN PERSON'S DESTINY.

IF YOU DON'T KNOW IT, MISS, I'D BE GLAD TO TELL YOU THIS MYSTERIOUS STORY.

BUT FIRST...

...THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO SHOW YOU.

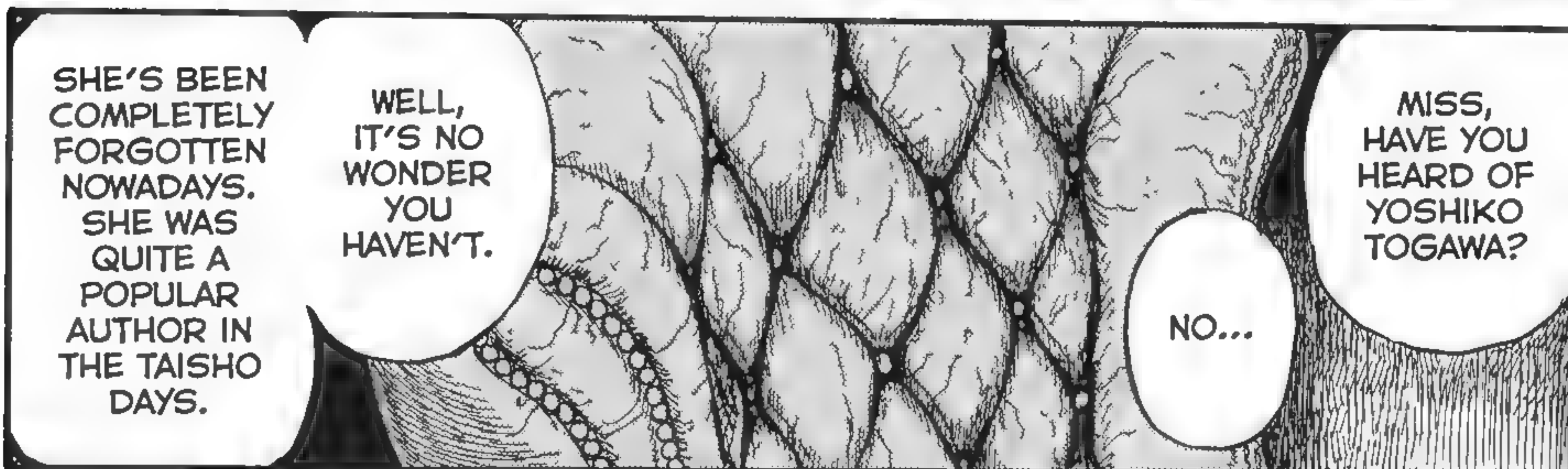
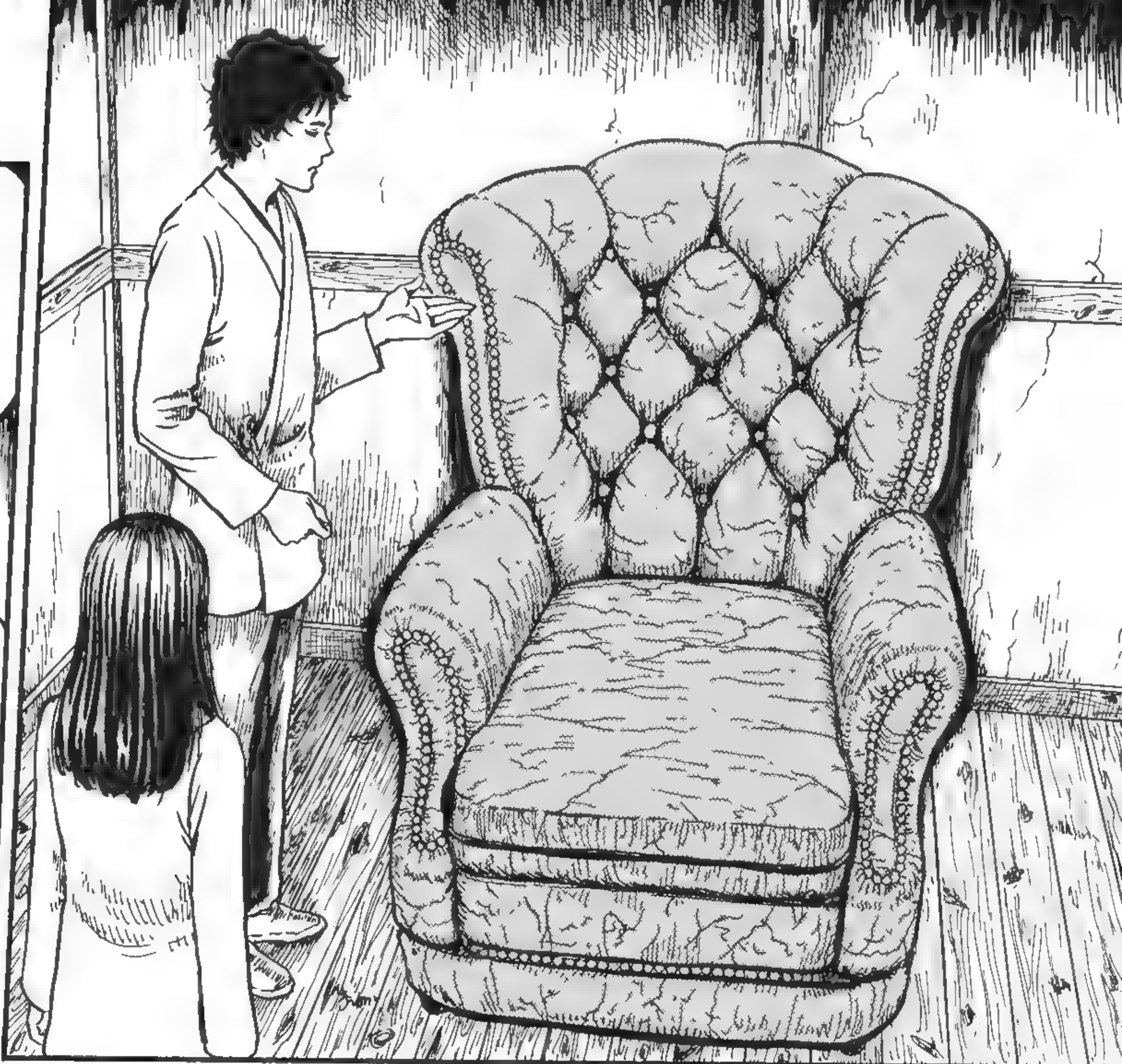
IT'S QUITE PRECIOUS, SO I KEEP IT IN THE BACK.

THIS WAY.

THIS OLD ARMCHAIR IS CONNECTED TO THE STORY I MENTIONED.

MISS, HAVE YOU HEARD OF YOSHIKO TOGAWA?

NO...

WELL, IT'S NO WONDER YOU HAVEN'T.

SHE'S BEEN COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN NOWADAYS. SHE WAS QUITE A POPULAR AUTHOR IN THE TAISHO DAYS.

SHE WAS THE WIFE OF A SECRETARY AT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND AN ACCOMPLISHED WRITER.

NEARLY EVERY DAY, UNKNOWN ADMIRERS WOULD SEND HER LETTERS AND MANU-SCRIPTS.

AND THEN ONE DAY, A CURIOUS MANUSCRIPT WAS DELIVERED TO HER DOOR.

Mrs. Yoshiko Togawa

THIS MANUSCRIPT HAD NO TITLE, NO AUTHOR NAME, AND IT BEGAN WITH THE ADDRESS "MADAME." ALMOST AS THOUGH SPEAKING TO HER DIRECTLY...

VIVID AND EARNEST... THE PAGES SPELLED OUT A MYSTERIOUS MONOLOGUE SOMEHOW NOT OF THIS WORLD.

Mrs. Yoshiko Togawa

THE STORY WAS OF AN UGLY FURNITURE MAKER WHO WAS CARRIED AWAY BY A VIOLENT PASSION.

HE HID HIMSELF INSIDE OF A CHAIR HE HAD BUILT AND GAVE HIMSELF OVER TO THE PLEASURES OF HIS PERVERSION.

THE CHAIR WAS FIRST PLACED IN A HOTEL BEFORE EVENTUALLY BEING SOLD TO A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL...

...AND THE CRAFTSMAN ENDED UP FALLING IN LOVE WITH THIS OFFICIAL'S WIFE.

THE MANUSCRIPT TOOK THE FORM OF A LETTER FROM THE CRAFTSMAN CONFESSING HIS LOVE TO HER.

YOSHIKO TOGAWA ASSUMED IT WAS A LOVE LETTER TO HER OWN SELF, AND A SHIVER RAN UP HER SPINE.

AAH, HOW DISTURB-ING.

BUT A LETTER ARRIVED SOON AFTER TO INFORM HER THAT THE MANUSCRIPT WAS FICTION.

Toshima-ku, Ikebukuro 3-chome 2

Mrs. Yoshiko Togawa

SHE HEAVED A SIGH OF RELIEF.

HOWEVER, THIS WAS NOTHING MORE THAN THE START OF...
...SOMETHING TRULY TERRIFYING.
THANK YOU AGAIN FOR THE MANUSCRIPT. YOU HAVE REALLY BROUGHT THE READERS TO OUR MAGAZINE *BITTER MEDICINE*, MRS. TOGAWA!
YOU'RE EVEN MORE ACTIVE THAN YOUR HUSBAND, AND HE'S A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL.
OH MY, I DOUBT THAT, MR. KAWAGUCHI.
EVERYONE LOVED YOUR "BLOSSOM IN THE MOONLIGHT" IN LAST MONTH'S EDITION, TOO. IT WAS SECOND IN THE READER SURVEY.
GOODNESS. SECOND!
WHO WAS NUMBER ONE THEN? MR. AOYAMA, I SUPPOSE.
NO. NUMBER ONE WAS "THE HUMAN CHAIR."
"THE HUMAN CHAIR"?!
"THE HUMAN CHAIR"... THE STORY I SHOWED YOU?
INDEED. THE VERY MANUSCRIPT THAT WAS SENT TO YOU.
I WAS SURPRISED AS WELL. A NO-NAME NEWBIE JUMPING STRAIGHT TO NUMBER ONE!

BUT IT CERTAINLY IS A DISTINCTIVE WORK.
SUCH A BIZARRE IDEA, A MAN CLIMBING INTO A CHAIR.
YES. THAT STORY ALSO STUNNED ME.
THE AUTHOR IS JUST AWFUL, HOWEVER.
I ACTUALLY WORK IN AN ARMCHAIR JUST LIKE THE ONE IN THE STORY.
UNTIL THE LETTER CAME, I THOUGHT THERE REALLY WAS SOMEONE INSIDE MY CHAIR.
OH, THAT REMINDS ME! THE AUTHOR'S ADDRESS ON THAT LETTER...
...IT APPEARS TO BE WRONG.
LETTERS AND TELEGRAMS KEPT BEING SENT BACK, SO I WENT THERE MYSELF.
THERE'S NO HOUSE AT THAT ADDRESS. SO WE STILL HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET IN TOUCH WITH THE AUTHOR. WE'RE AT WIT'S END.
GOODNESS...
I WONDER WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED.
HAVE YOU HEARD FROM THE AUTHOR SINCE, MRS. TOGAWA?
NO, NOT A WORD.

WELCOME HOME, MADAME.

KACHAK

AAH, I'M SO TIRED...

FWUMP

I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT NEW WRITER TOOK NUMBER ONE... HOW DREADFUL.

AND THEY DON'T KNOW HIS ADDRESS.

WHAT COULD THAT MEAN?

AH!

IT...

IT COULDN'T BE.

DARLING, I KNOW THIS IS A SUDDEN QUESTION.
BUT WHERE DID YOU BUY THAT ARMCHAIR?
HM? THIS? I GOT IT AT AN AUCTION AT A FURNITURE SHOP IN THE CITY OF Y.
WHAT? A FURNITURE SHOP...
...AT AN AUCTION?
YOSHIKO? WHY DO YOU ASK?
OH... NO, IT'S NOTHING.
THAT NIGHT.
JUST AN UNPLEASANT COINCIDENCE.
YES, JUST A COINCIDENCE.

KRIK KRIK KRIK

BUT IT'S JUST A COINCIDENCE.

THAT MANUSCRIPT ALSO SAID THAT THE OFFICIAL BOUGHT THE CHAIR AT AN AUCTION AT A Y FURNITURE SHOP.

...AT THIS HOUR?

KRIK

WHO COULD THAT BE...

PLAP PLAP

KRIK KRIK PLAP PLAP PLAP

KRIK PLAP PLAP

KRIK PLAP PLAP

KRIK KRIK

KRIK PLAP PLAP

...MM.

KRIK KRIK

IT'S NOT. THE SERVANTS DON'T WALK LIKE THAT.

JUST A SERVANT?

MWAH, MYAH... WHAT?

SOMEONE'S WALKING AROUND THE HOUSE.

DARLING... DARLING, WAKE UP.

KRIK
KRIK
A BURGLAR?
PLAP PLAP PLAP PLAP
KREEEEE
SLAM
THAT... SOUNDED LIKE SOMEONE GOING INTO STUDY IN THE WEST WING.
WHAT'S WRONG, YOSHIKO?
IT CAN'T BE.
IT CAN'T BE...
DARLING, PLEASE CHECK THE CHAIR. IT MIGHT BE... THERE MIGHT BE...
...A PERSON INSIDE THE CHAIR...
WHAT?
REMEMBER? THAT MANUSCRIPT I GOT? "THE HUMAN CHAIR"... I THOUGHT IT WAS FICTION, BUT...
...I JUST FEEL LIKE THE MAN REALLY IS INSIDE THAT CHAIR.
AND NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, HE CLIMBS OUT...
RUBBISH. THAT'S A BURGLAR DIGGING AROUND IN THE STUDY.
WATCH. I'LL CATCH HIM.

KREEEEE

KACHAK

KRIK

KRIK

KRIK

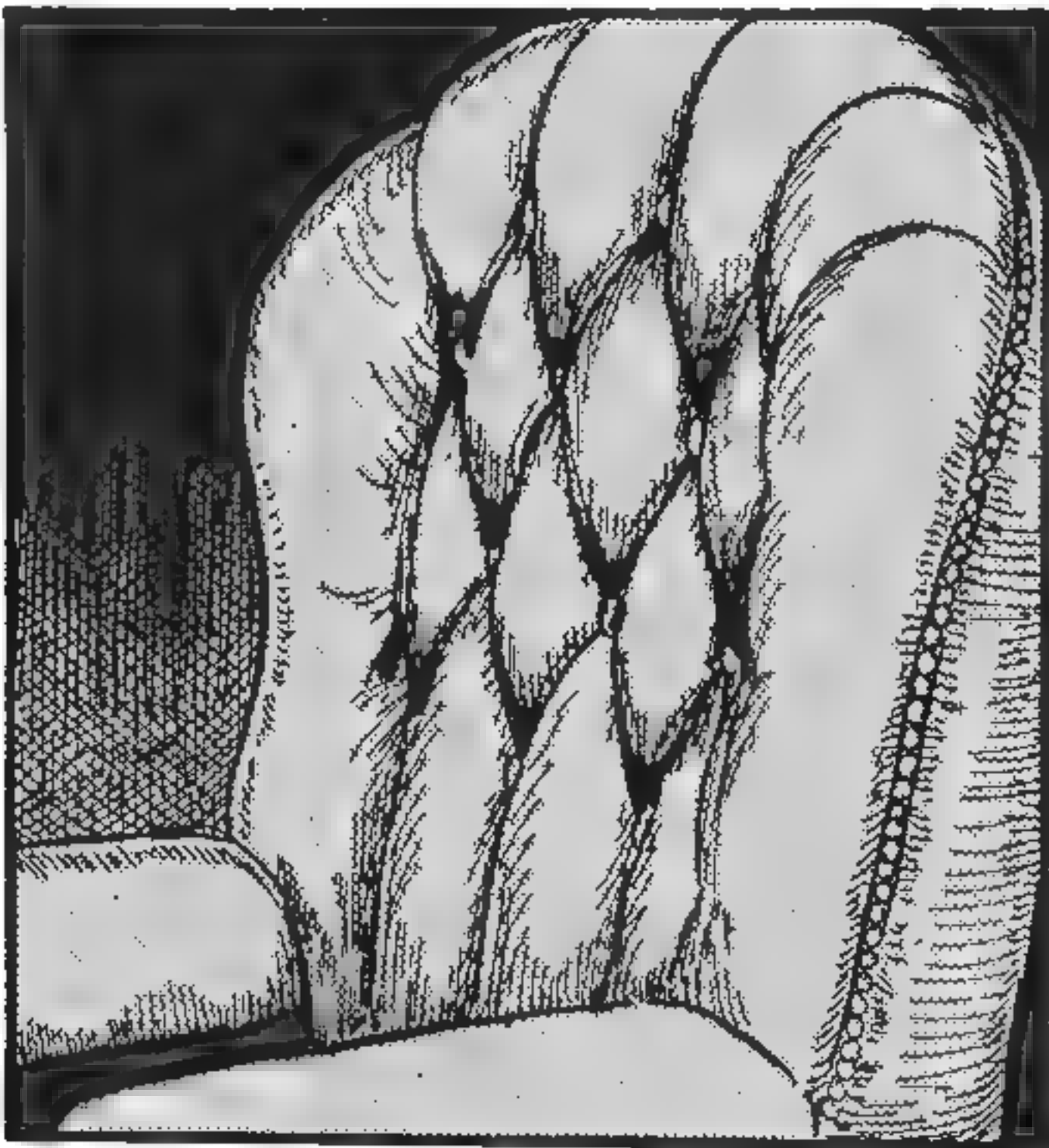
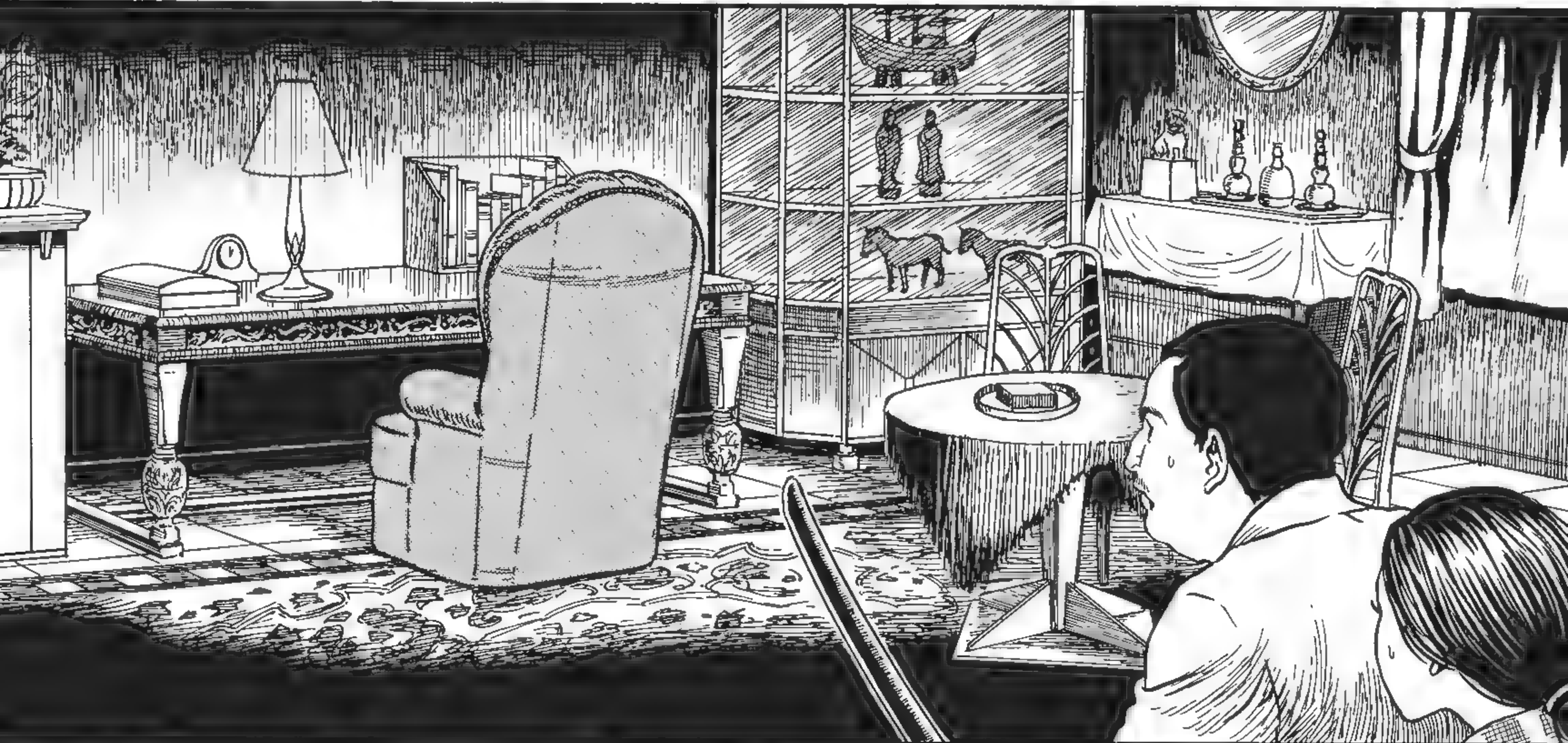
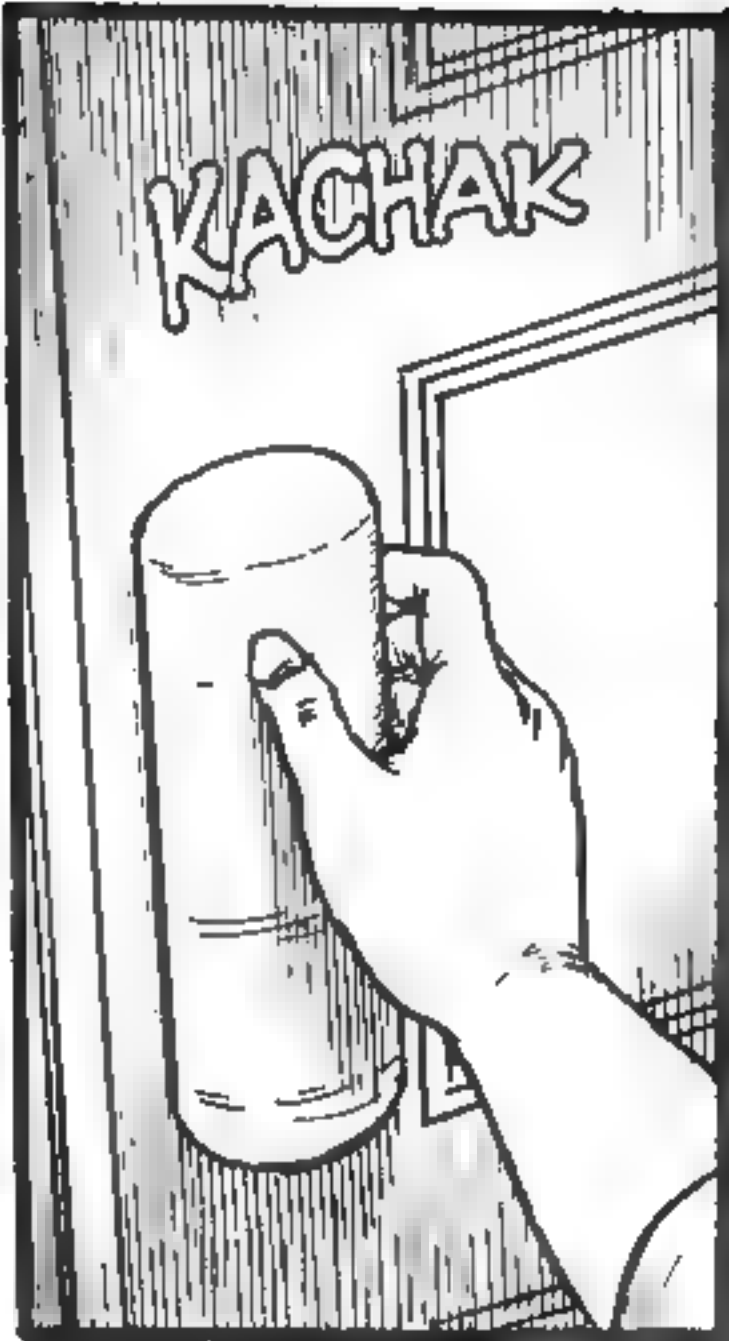
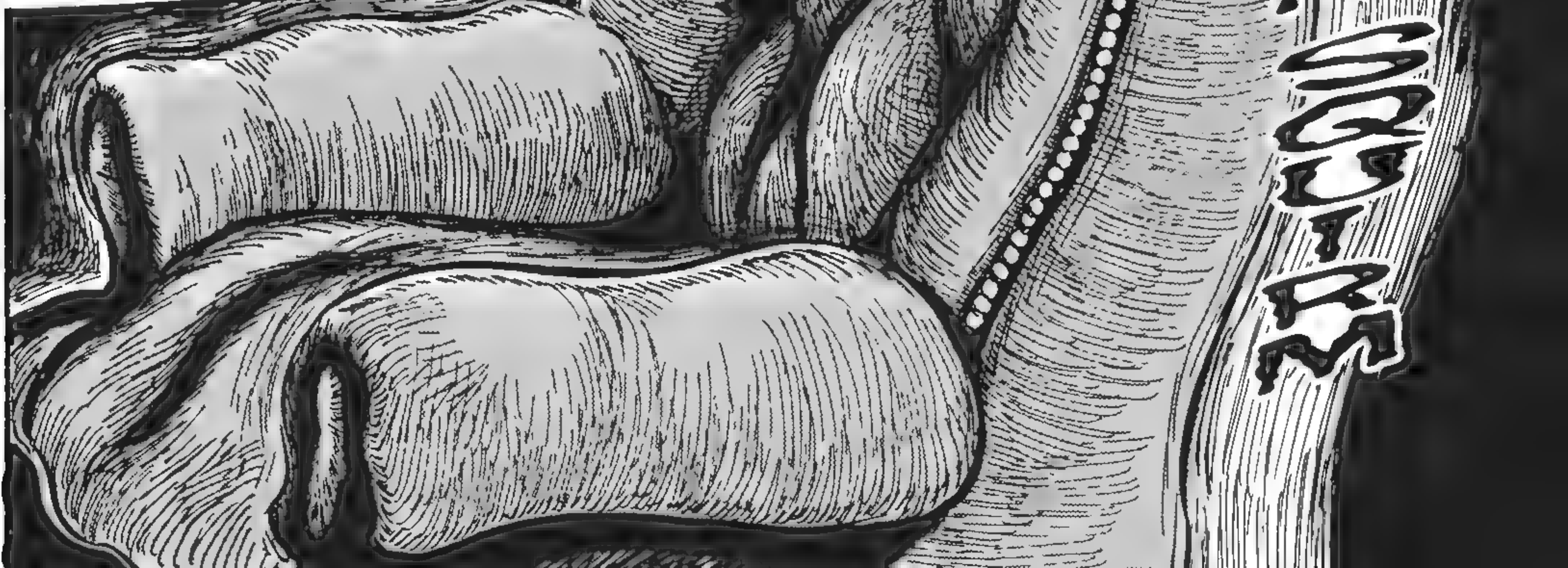
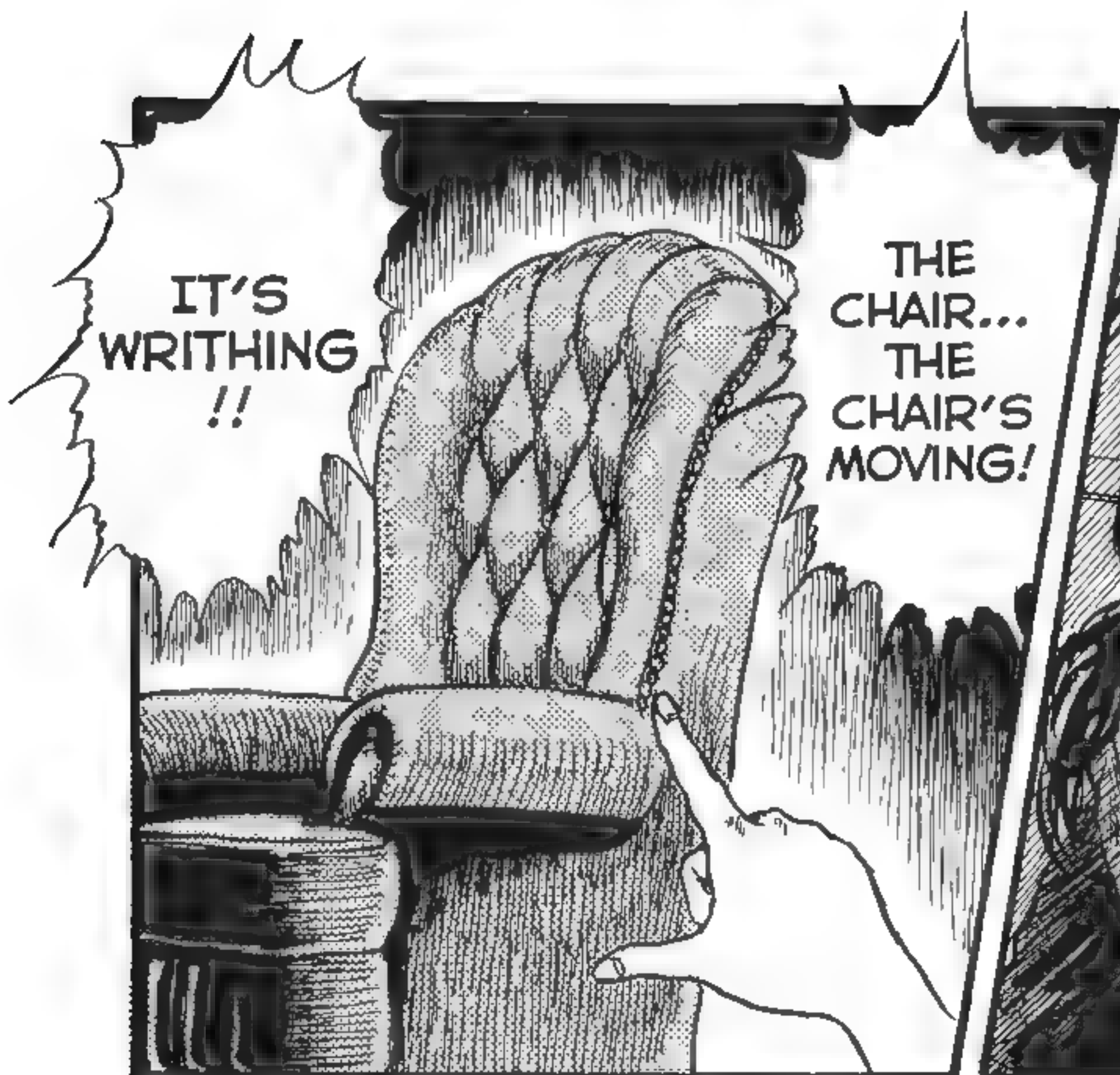
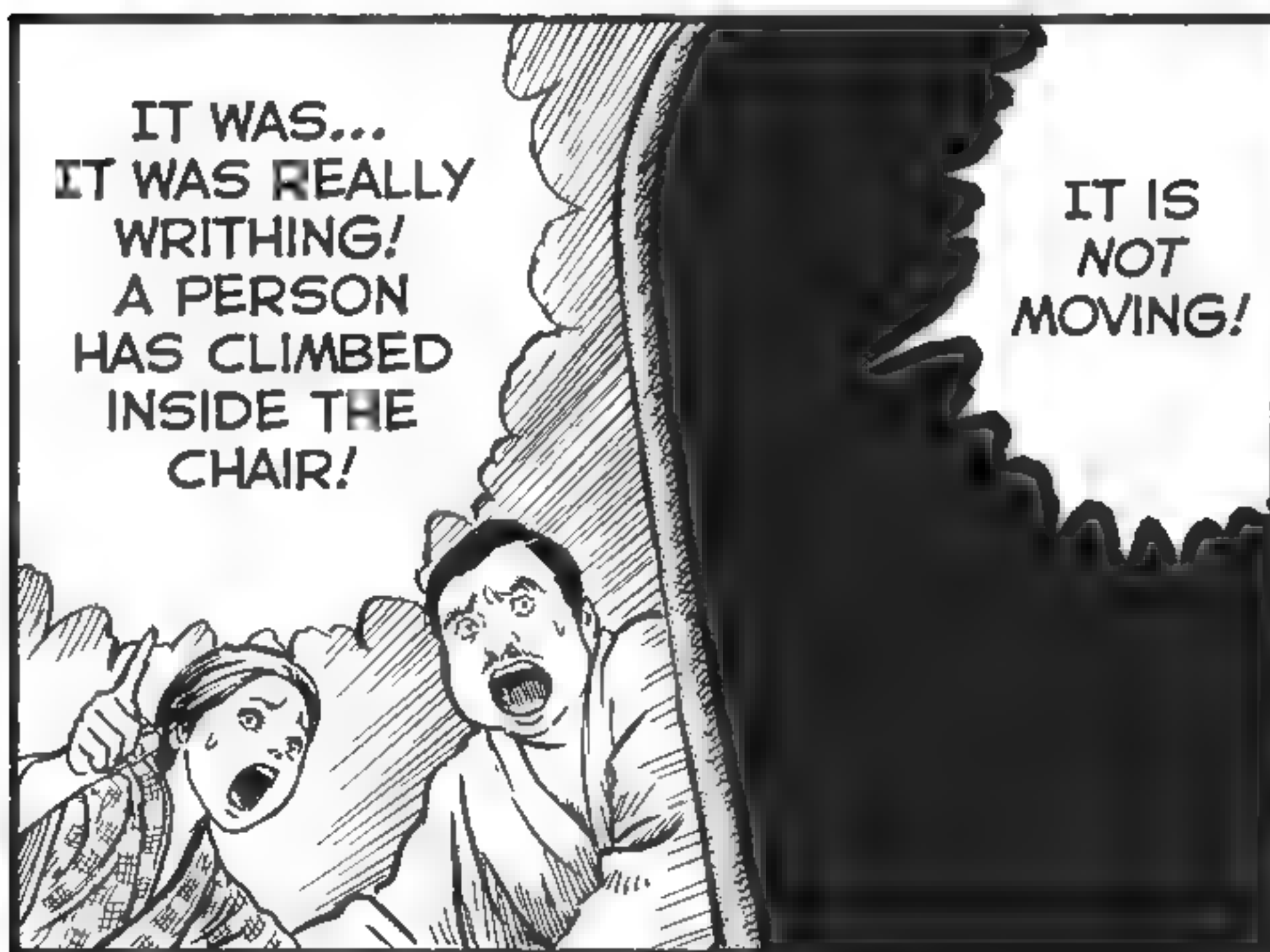
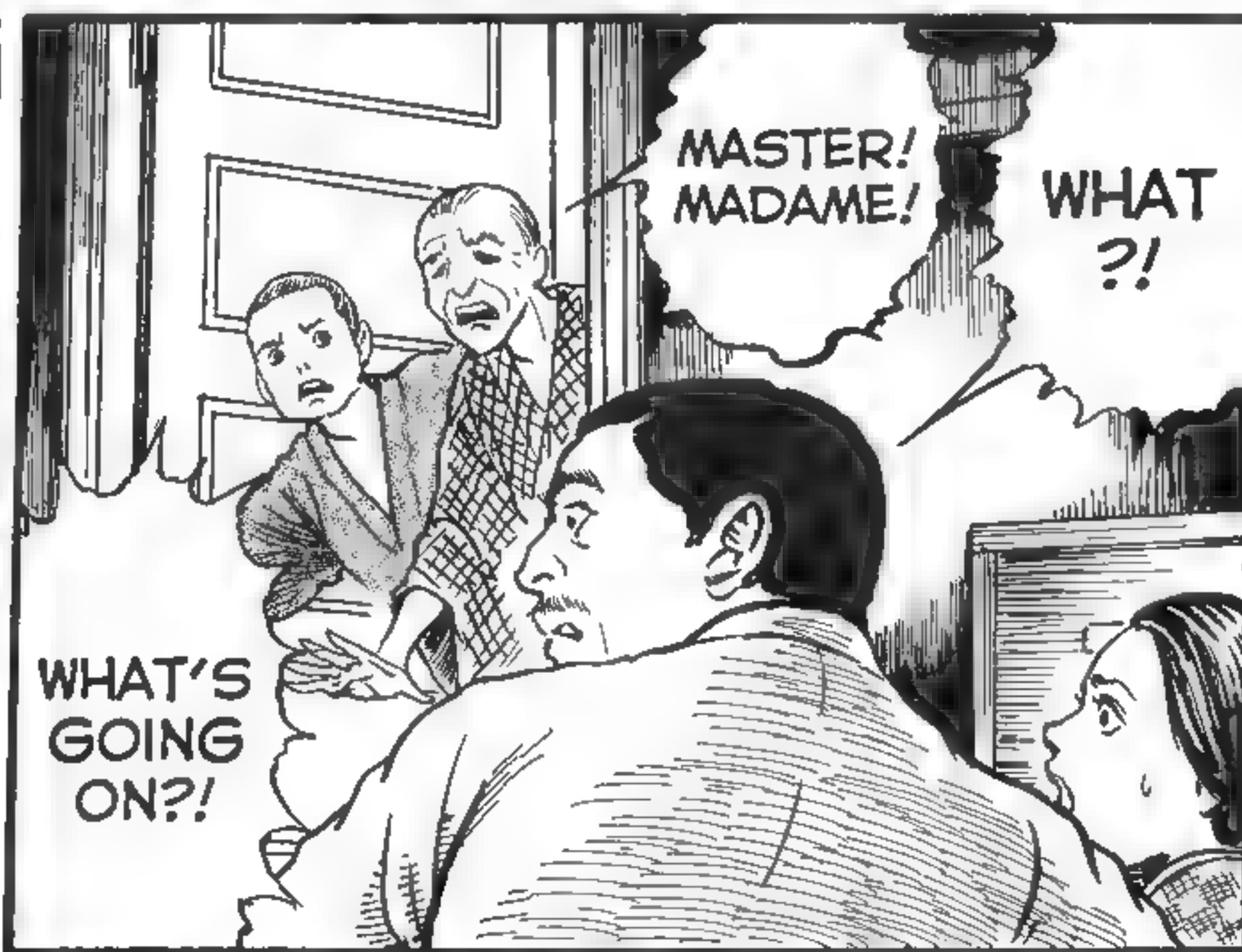
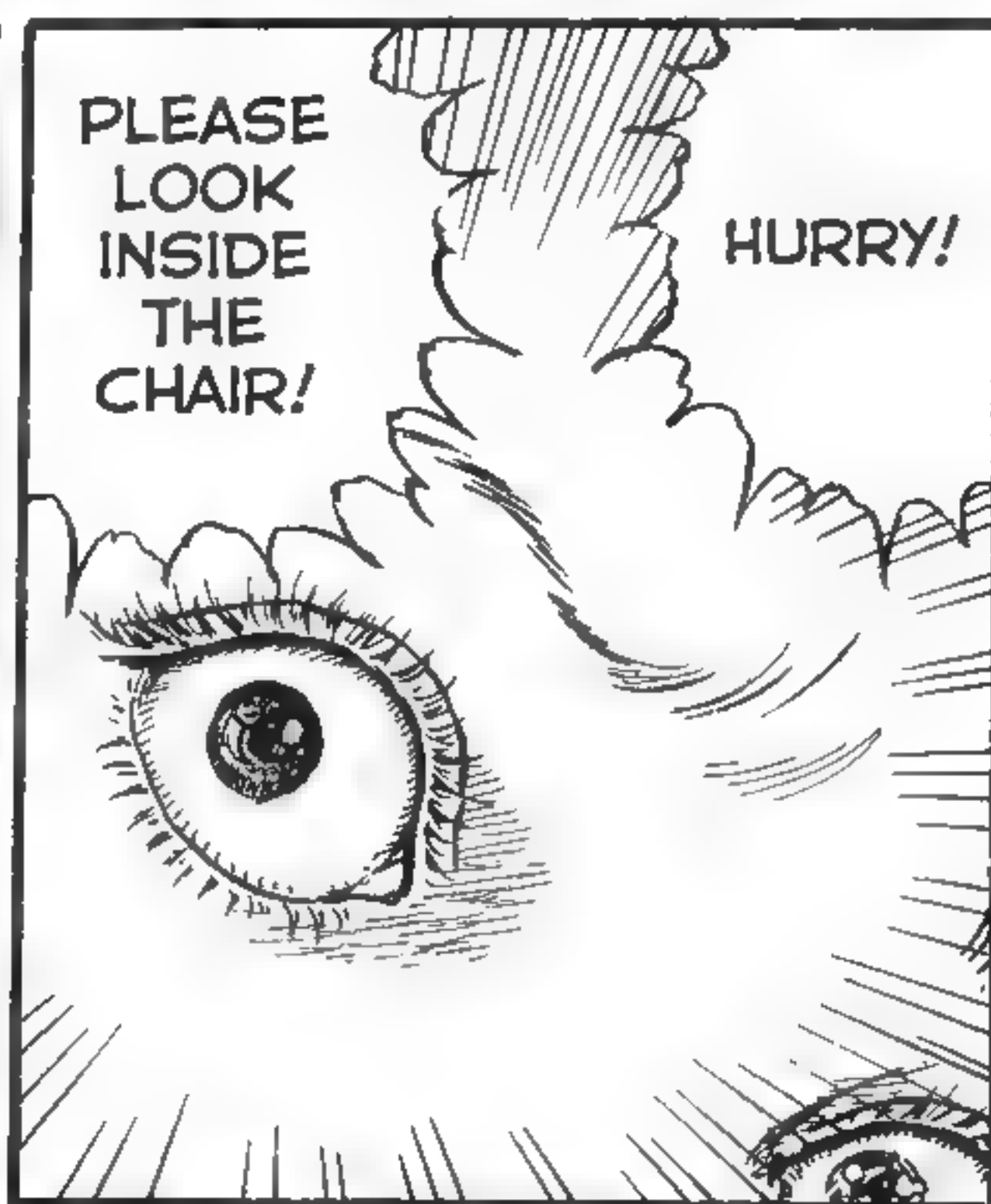
HEY!!

WHO'S IN HERE?!

SQUIRM
SQUIRM
SQUIRM
SQUIRM

AAAAH!!

SQUIRM SQUIRM

SQUIRM SQUIRM

IT'S WRITHING !!
THE CHAIR... THE CHAIR'S MOVING!
YOSHIKO! WHAT'S WRONG?!
IT WAS... IT WAS REALLY WRITHING! A PERSON HAS CLIMBED INSIDE THE CHAIR!
IT IS *NOT* MOVING!
MASTER! MADAME!
WHAT ?!
WHAT'S GOING ON?!
PLEASE LOOK INSIDE THE CHAIR!
HURRY!
W- WHAT ...?

MADAME, I CAN'T FIND ANYTHING RESEMBLING AN ENTRANCE ANYWHERE.
IT'S CLEVERLY HIDDEN! PEEL OFF THE LEATHER AND LOOK!
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS! THIS CHAIR WAS EXPENSIVE!
IF YOU'RE SO WORRIED, I'LL JUST DO THIS.
WATCH!
WHAP
WHAP
WHAP
WHAP
WHAP
WHAP
HAAH.
SO, YOSHIKO?
NO MATTER HOW I BEAT IT, IT DOESN'T SO MUCH AS TWITCH. THERE'S NO ONE INSIDE.
...

A FEW DAYS LATER.

HAVE A SAFE TRIP, SIR.

MADAME, HERE IS THIS MORNING'S POST.

THANK YOU.

AH!

Toshima-ku, Ikebukuro 3-chome Mrs. Yoshiko Togawa

THIS HANDWRITING...

Toshima-ku, Ikebukuro 3-chome Mrs. Yoshiko Togawa

RRRIP

Madame, You haven't been sitting in my chair recently. I wonde...

Toshima Ike...

You haven't been sitting in my chair recently. I wonder if you have any idea how terribly sad this makes me.

Additionally, can you begin to understand, madame, how great was my suffering on a certain night when I received such poor treatment?

I know that your work as a writer is more important to you than your husband. And also that the chair that I am is indispensible to your creation...

Madame, your husband is a terrible man. No, I say this not because he beat me. But rather, your husband is jealous of your work.

Madame, you are such that you simply cannot live without me. And I too cannot live without you.

I eagerly await the day when I can become one with you forever...

You must sink down deep into me and be held gently by my body.

Otherwise, you cannot make full use of your true creative power. I know this as well.

RIDICULOUS. THE IDEA THAT I CAN'T WRITE WITHOUT THAT CHAIR...

WHO DO YOU THINK I AM?!

CRUMPLE

WELCOME HOME, SIR.

DIDN'T WE AGREE YOU WOULD WRITE YOUR NOVELS IN THE STUDY DURING THE DAY WHEN I'M NOT HOME?

I'M SORRY. I'M STUCK ON THE NEXT INSTALLMENT OF MY SERIES. I JUST...

AHH ...

YOSHIKO! WHY DIDN'T YOU COME OUT TO GREET ME?!

I REALLY AM SORRY.

OH, PLEASE...

STOP MAKING EXCUSES ABOUT HOW THE CHAIR IS CREEPY.

YOU CAN STOP RIGHT NOW WITH BLAMING THE CHAIR IF YOU'RE UNABLE TO WRITE!

I WAS WRONG. I'M JUST A LITTLE UPSET BECAUSE WRITING'S BEEN A STRUGGLE LATELY.

PLEASE ...

THUD

DARLING?

AH! YOU'RE BLEEDING!

DARLING!

SHF SHF

SHF

WHAT ON EARTH'S HAPPENED?

A MURDER, APPARENTLY.

THE HIGH-RANKING OFFICIAL MR. TOGAWA'S BEEN MURDERED.

CHATTER CHATTER

CHATTER CHATTER

AAAAAAAAAH!!

HE PLUNGED A KNIFE THROUGH THE CHAIR AND STABBED MY HUSBAND.
THERE'S A MAN INSIDE THAT CHAIR!
OFFICER! IT'S THE CHAIR! PLEASE EXAMINE THE CHAIR!
A MAN IN THE CHAIR?
WHAT?
WELL, LET'S TAKE A LOOK INSIDE AT ANY RATE.
WHAT?!
THERE IS INDEED A CUT IN THE CHAIR.
GASP
RIP RIP
SHHHF

EEEAAAAH!
PINEAPPLE
SALMON

AND INDEED, INSIDE THE CHAIR...

...WERE SIGNS OF A PERSON LIVING THERE.

SO THEN... WHAT HAPPENED...

...TO THE WRITER YOSHIKO TOGAWA AFTER THAT?

THE POLICE ACCEPTED HER STATEMENT, BUT THE MEDIA SUSPECTED SHE HAD KILLED HER HUSBAND.

THAT IS TO SAY, THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE IN THE HUMAN CHAIR.

HOWEVER, HER STRUGGLE TO WRITE ONLY GREW WORSE, UNTIL YOU COULD SAY SHE DEVELOPED A MENTAL ILLNESS.

EVENTU-ALLY, YOSHIKO TOGAWA WENT MISSING.

THEY SAY SHE WAS NEVER SEEN AGAIN AFTER THAT.

IN THE END... THAT CHAIR MIGHT REALLY...

...HAVE BEEN AN ESSENTIAL PART OF HER CREATIVE PROCESS.

SO THEN... THIS CHAIR CAN'T POSSIBLY BE...
... THE SAME ONE.
THIS? NO, THIS IS NOT THAT CHAIR.
THAT CHAIR WAS SEIZED BY THE POLICE, AND ITS WHEREABOUTS ARE NOW UNKNOWN.
BUT THIS CHAIR *IS* RELATED TO THIS STORY.
PLEASE TAKE A LOOK.
TUG
AH?!
RRK
I ONLY SHOW THIS...
RRK TUG RRK RRK
...TO PEOPLE I REALLY LIKE.
RRK
RRK
RRK
HAAH.
NOW.
PLEASE HAVE A LOOK.

AAAAAH!
THIS IS THE FATE OF YOSHIKO TOGAWA... AND THE MAN WHO LOVED HER SO DEEPLY.
THE MAN'S FEELINGS WERE RECIP-ROCATED. AND SHE GAINED ETERNAL COMFORT.
AFTER YOSHIKO'S DISAPPEARANCE, THEY LIVED AS A COUPLE IN THIS CHAIR UNTIL THE NATURAL END OF HER DAYS. I SUPPOSE IT WAS A STRANGE, SOMEWHAT BIZARRE MARRIED LIFE.
OF COURSE, DURING THAT TIME, THEY WERE ALSO BLESSED WITH CHILDREN.
THIS CHAIR HAS BEEN CAREFULLY PRESERVED BY THE GENERATIONS OF THEIR DESCENDANTS.
MISS ...
WOULD YOU BELIEVE ME IF I SAID THAT *I* AM ONE OF THOSE DESCENDANTS?
...
NO WAY.

EXCUSE ME FOR ASKING, BUT...

...YOU'RE THE WRITER YUZUHO HAYAMA, AREN'T YOU?

WHAT?!

I REALIZED IT THE MOMENT WE MET.

I LOVE YOUR WORK. I'VE READ IT ALL.

BUT I HEARD YOU'VE BEEN HAVING SOME TROUBLE LATELY.

IS IT TRUE YOU HAVE WRITER'S BLOCK?

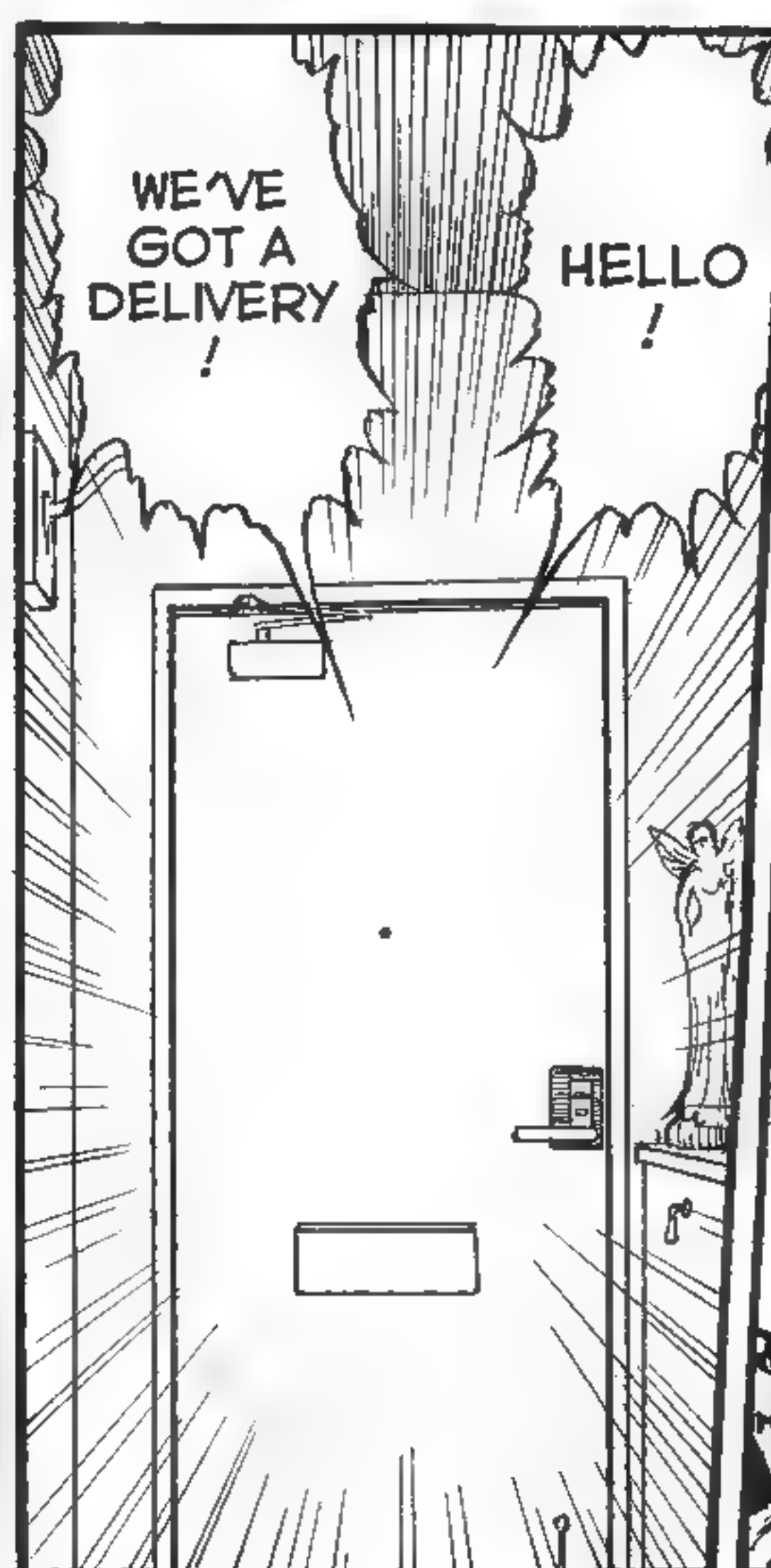
I'LL MAKE A CHAIR FOR YOU. YOU'LL DEFINITELY BE ABLE TO PULL OUT OF IT.

YES... I GUARANTEE IT.

N-NO...

THAT'S FINE... I...

PLEASE EXCUSE ME!

WAS ...
...IT ALL A DREAM ...?
BUT I DID LOOK IT UP AND FOUND THAT THE FACTS CHECKED OUT ON THE STORY THE CRAFTSMAN TOLD ME.
THE WRITER YOSHIKO TOGAWA REALLY EXISTED, AND THERE WERE ARTICLES ABOUT THE HUMAN CHAIR INCIDENT.
Yoshiko Togawa
Human Chair Murder
I CAN'T WRITE AT ALL.
I'M TIRED OF RUNNING AND HIDING FROM MY EDITOR.
MAYBE... THIS IS REALLY THE END.
DING DONG
HELLO!
WE'VE GOT A DELIVERY!
IT'S HEAVY, SO WE'LL BRING IT RIGHT INSIDE!
IF WE COULD JUST GET YOUR SIGNA-TURE.

WHAT?

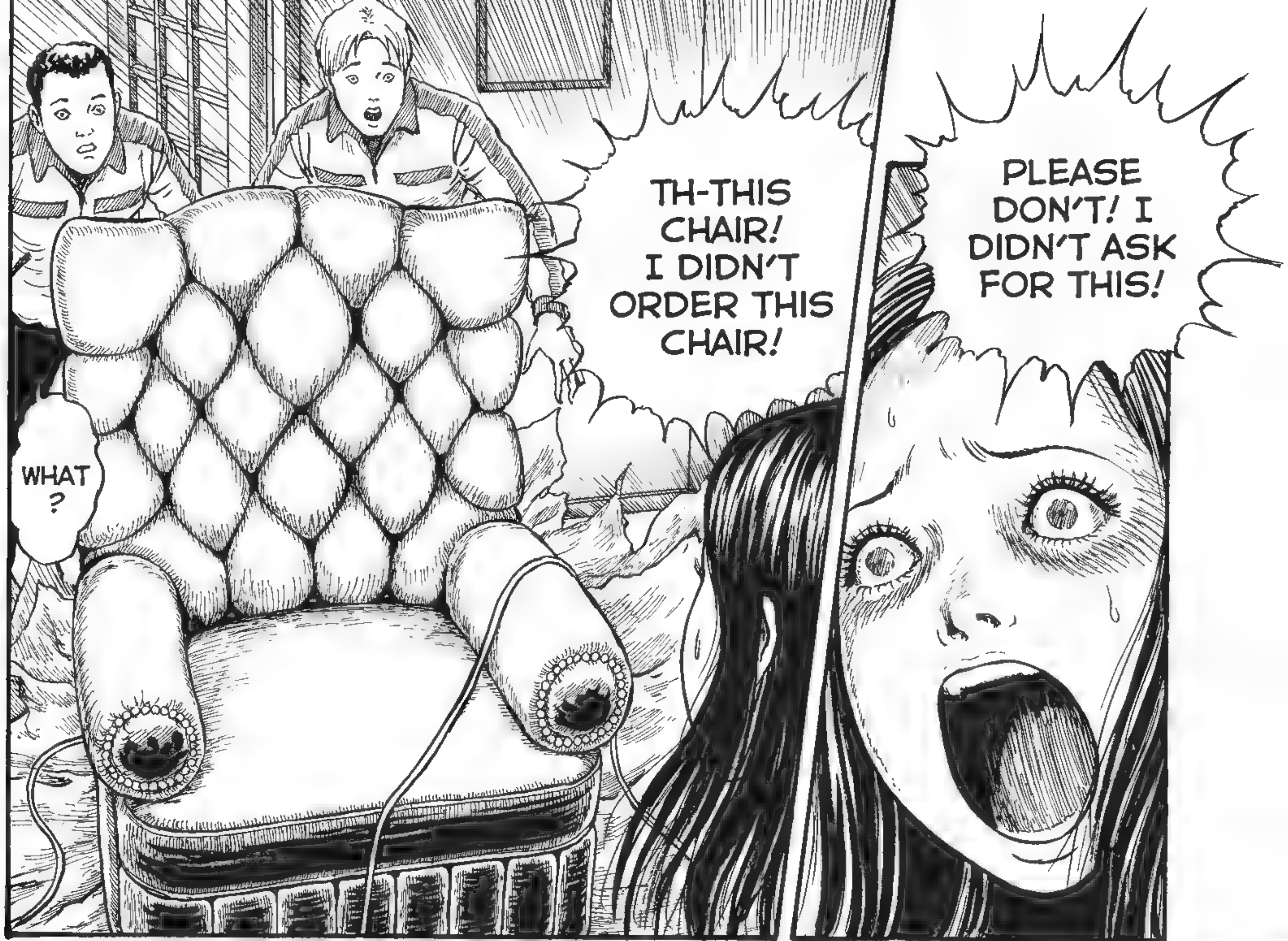
TH-THIS CHAIR! I DIDN'T ORDER THIS CHAIR!

PLEASE DON'T! I DIDN'T ASK FOR THIS!

SQUIRM

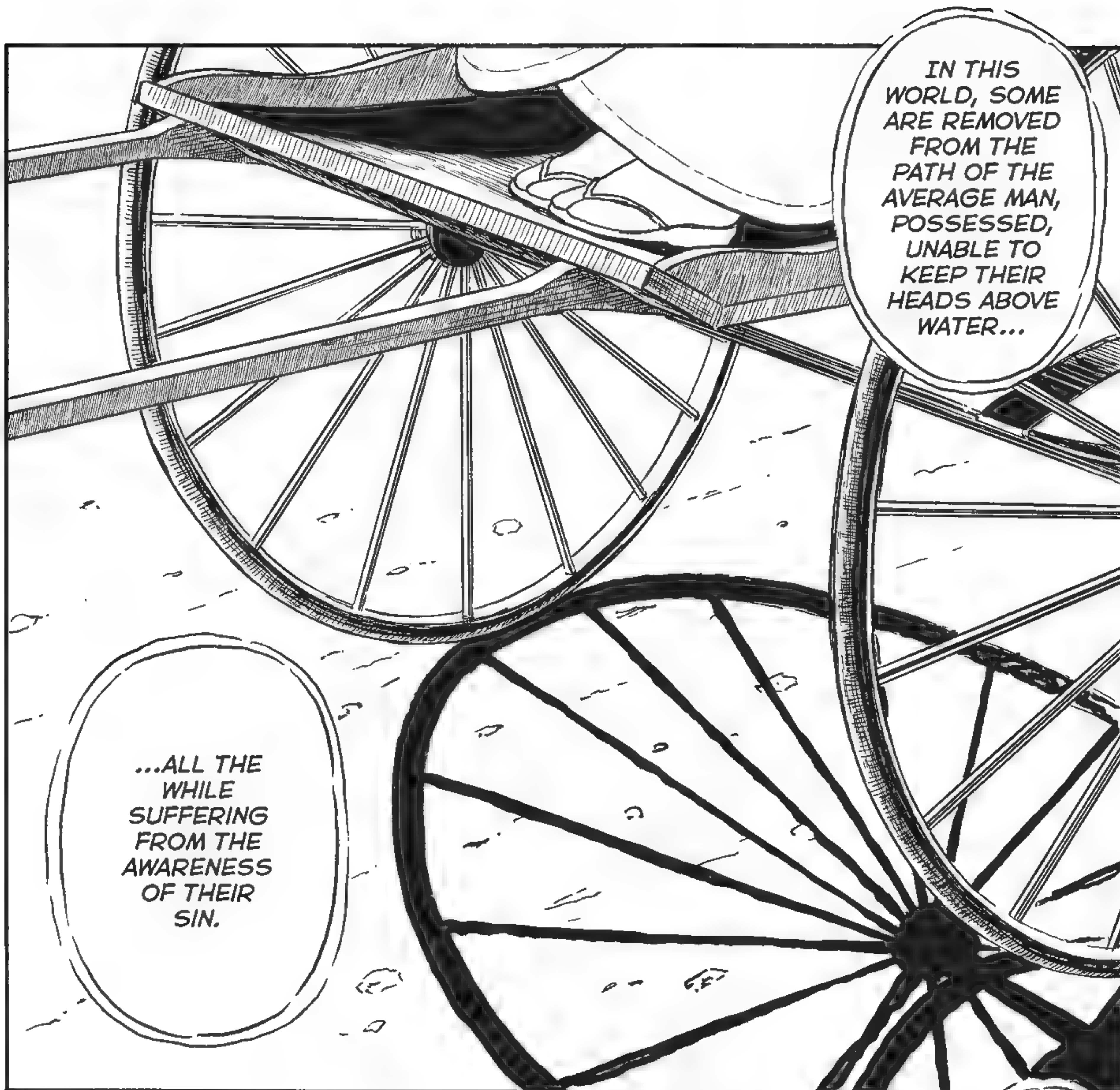
SQUIRM

SQUIRM

SQUIRM

AN UNEARTHLY LOVE

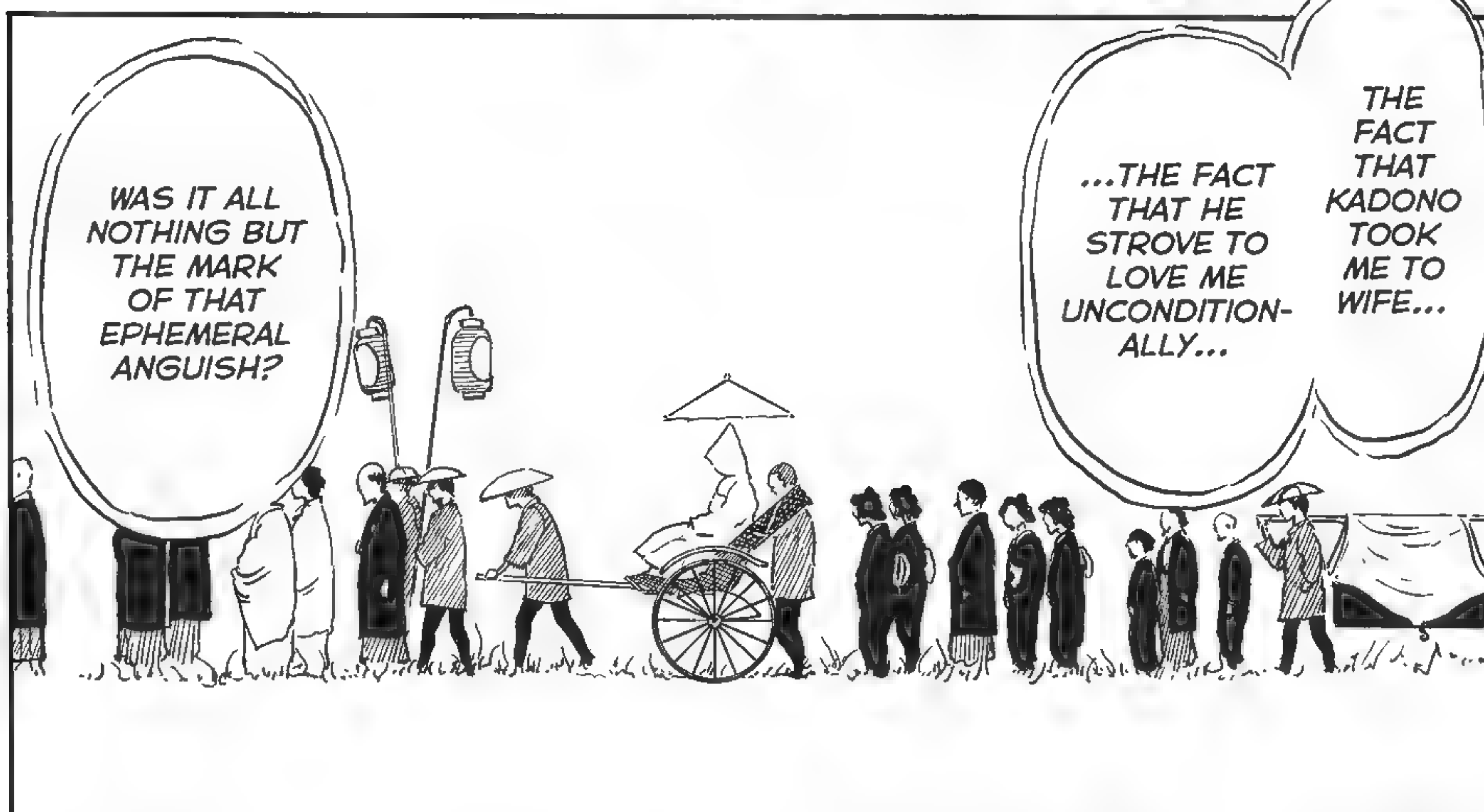
ORIGINAL STORY BY EDOGAWA RANPO

Edogawa Ranpo

1894—1965. Born in Nabari, Mie Prefecture, Japan he went on to graduate from the economics department of Waseda University. His real name was Taro Hirai. He took his pen name from the 19th century American writer Edgar Allan Poe. He published "The Two-Sen Copper Coin" in *Shin Seinen* in 1923, and created the foundations for the mystery genre in Japan. His most famous works include "The Human Chair," *Beast in the Shadows*, *The Golden Mask*, and the essay collection *The Phantom Castle*.

IN THIS WORLD, SOME ARE REMOVED FROM THE PATH OF THE AVERAGE MAN, POSSESSED, UNABLE TO KEEP THEIR HEADS ABOVE WATER...

...ALL THE WHILE SUFFERING FROM THE AWARENESS OF THEIR SIN.

THE FACT THAT KADONO TOOK ME TO WIFE...

...THE FACT THAT HE STROVE TO LOVE ME UNCONDITION-ALLY...

WAS IT ALL NOTHING BUT THE MARK OF THAT EPHEMERAL ANGUISH?

I DO WONDER WHAT TWIST OF FATE LED TO ME MARRYING INTO THE KADONO HOUSE.

THEY WERE A FAMILY OF SOME RENOWN, SO I KNEW HIS FACE AT LEAST.

BUT I'D HEARD KADONO WAS RUMORED TO BE QUITE MOODY AND A HATER OF WOMEN.

GLANCE

FWP

SUCH A HANDSOME MAN AS THIS HATES WOMEN? HE COULDN'T POSSIBLY.

HE RATHER SEEMS MORE LIKE HE'D HAVE A BEAUTIFUL LOVER SECRETED AWAY...

IN FACT, HE WAS KINDER THAN THE AVERAGE MAN AND HE TREATED ME RATHER GENTLY.
THEY SAY THAT IT IS WORSE TO WORRY THAN TO ACT. KADONO WAS NOT SO STRANGE A MAN AS RUMOR HAD IT.
DARLING KYOKO...
KYOKO ...
KYOKO.
KYOKO ...
OH, DARLING, I'M SO HAPPY.
I LOVE YOU. I TRULY DO...

YOU'RE AWAKE?
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT?
KYOKO... ABOUT YOU.
I WAS THINKING ABOUT HOW I CHERISH YOU.
OH, YOU...

DARLING ...
AH!
ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?!
WHAT'S WRONG?
DARLING?
...
KYOKO?
I LOVE YOU.

KYOKO... I LOVE YOU...

KYOKO... I LOVE YOU...

I LOVE YOU...

I LOVE YOU... I LOVE YOU... I LOVE YOU...

I LOVE YOU...

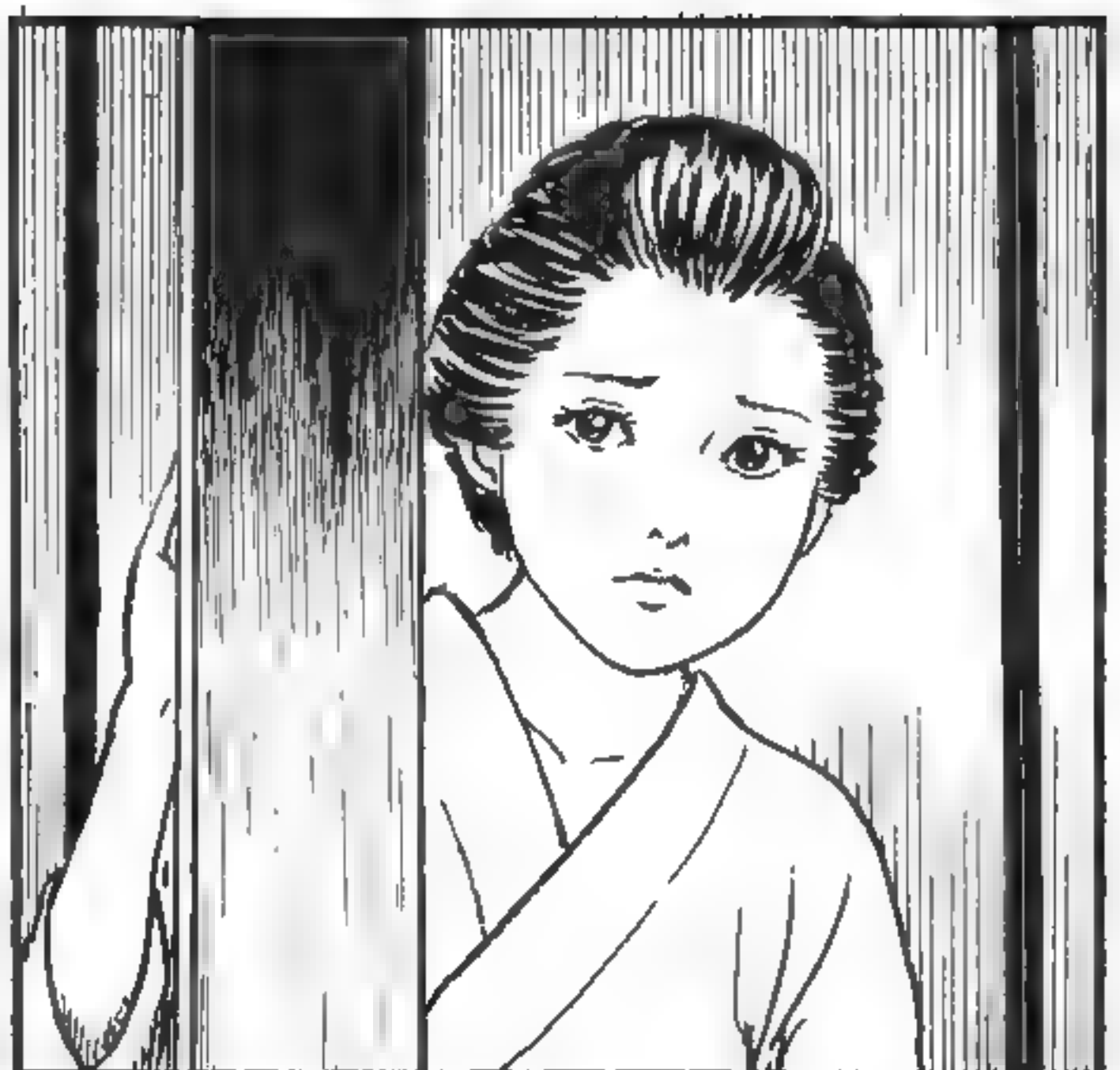
I LOVE YOU...

... DARLING ?

I... LOVE... YOU...

WHAT'S THE MATTER?
ARE YOU ILL SOMEHOW?
...
I LOVE YOU...
I LOVE YOU...
I LOVE YOU.

SHHHF
SHF
RIBBIT
RIBBIT
RIBBIT
RIBBIT
SNAP
KLAKKA KLAKKA KLAKKA

HE KEEPS SNEAKING INTO THE STORE-HOUSE AT DAYBREAK LATELY.
WHAT ON EARTH FOR...?
KLAKKA KLAKKA
HE CAN'T HAVE ANOTHER WOMAN?
IT CAN'T BE...
RIBBIT
RIBBIT RIBBIT
KREE
KREE

HMM.
WHY WOULD HE LOCK IT...?
WHISPER WHISPER
WHISPER WHISPER
WE KEEP MEETING LIKE THIS.
I FEEL BAD FOR YOUR WIFE...
I FEEL THE SAME MYSELF.
I KEEP TRYING TO LOVE KYOKO...
BUT IT'S HOPE-LESS.

I FEEL SO TERRIBLE, THERE'S NO WAY I COULD EVER MAKE IT UP TO HER.

BUT I FIND MYSELF UNABLE TO LEAVE YOU, NOT WHEN YOU'VE BEEN WITH ME SINCE MY YOUTH.

I'M SO HAPPY TO HEAR THAT. I'M A LUCKY WOMAN.

RUSTLE

CHAK CHAK CHAK

CHAK

KREE

SNAP

KLAKKA KLAKKA

... WHERE'S THE WOMAN?

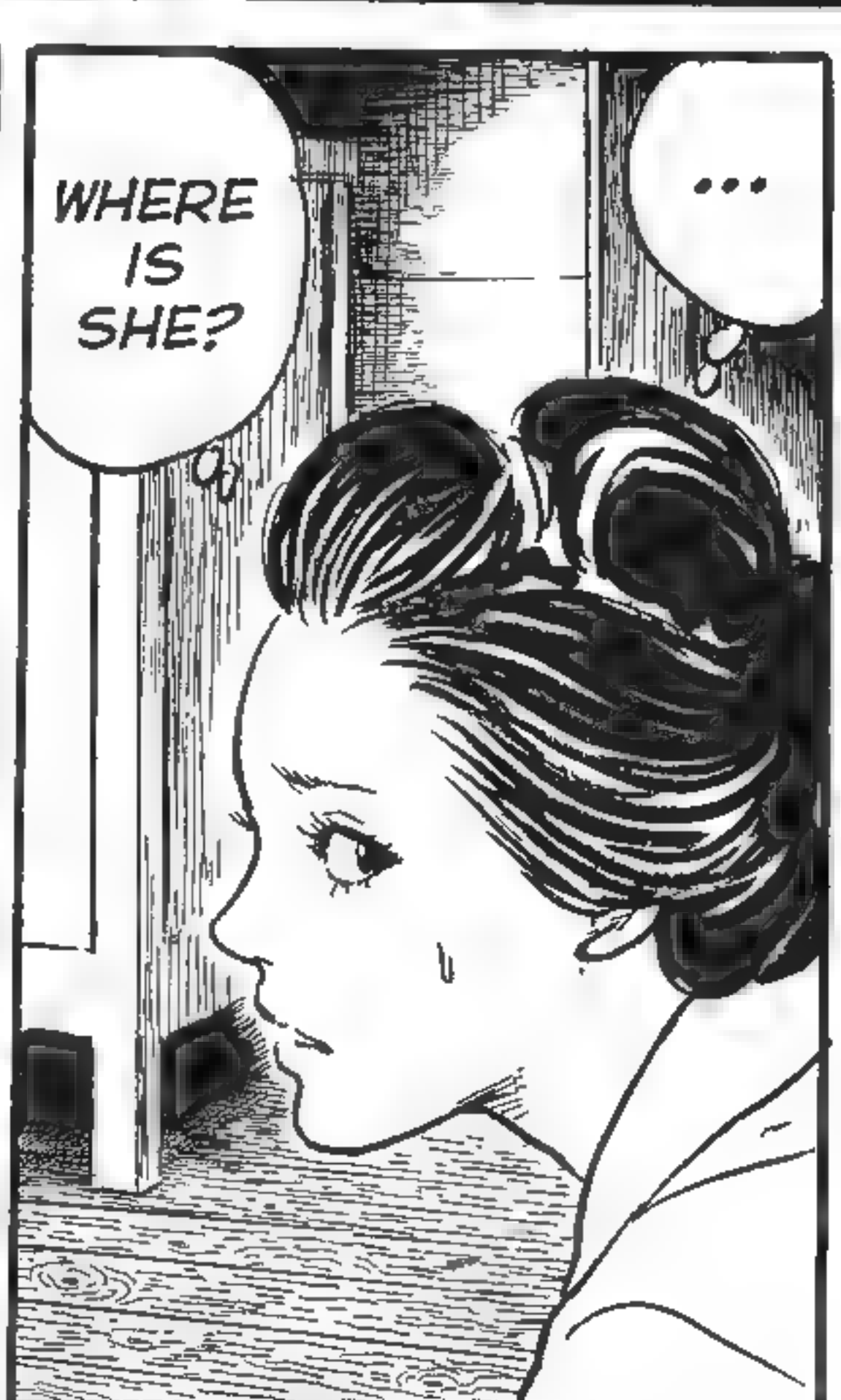
KREEE

I LOOKED IN EVERY NOOK AND CRANNY ON THE SECOND FLOOR.

BUT I COULDN'T FIND SO MUCH AS A HOLE THROUGH WHICH A SINGLE MOUSE COULD ESCAPE.

WHERE IS SHE?

...

FROM THEN ON, I SLIPPED INTO THE STOREHOUSE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT ANY NUMBER OF TIMES.

AND THE WHISPERED INTIMACIES OF MY HUSBAND AND HIS LOVER FILLED MY HEART WITH SUCH DESPAIR.

I TOOK ALL KINDS OF PAINS TO TRY AND SEE THE WOMAN.

BUT I NEVER CAUGHT SO MUCH AS A GLIMPSE.

DARLING ...

GLOOMY BY NATURE AND REMINISCENT OF A SNAKE, KADONO... PERHAPS HE WAS SUSCEPTIBLE TO POSSESSION BY THE FANTASTIC.

PERHAPS SOME KIND OF LIVING SPIRIT HAD BEWITCHED KADONO.

SLAM

...

WHISPER WHISPER

WHISPER WHISPER

AND THEN, ONE NIGHT, I NOTICED SOMETHING STRANGE.

THE ONLY THINGS ON THE SECOND FLOOR THAT COULD MAKE A SOUND LIKE THAT ARE THE CHESTS.

THAT'S THE SOUND OF A LID CLOSING AND A LOCK BEING LOCKED. I THINK I'VE HEARD THIS BEFORE, TOO.

CHAK CHAK

THE NEXT DAY...

KREE

KREE

CHAK CHAK

CHAK

KREE

KREE

拝領

CHAK

CHAK

KREE

*Bestowed

拝領

IN THAT INSTANT, MY SUSPICIONS OF THE PREVIOUS DAYS WERE COMPLETELY UNDONE.

COULD SUCH A THING AS THIS BE CALLED A FLASH OF INSPIRATION?

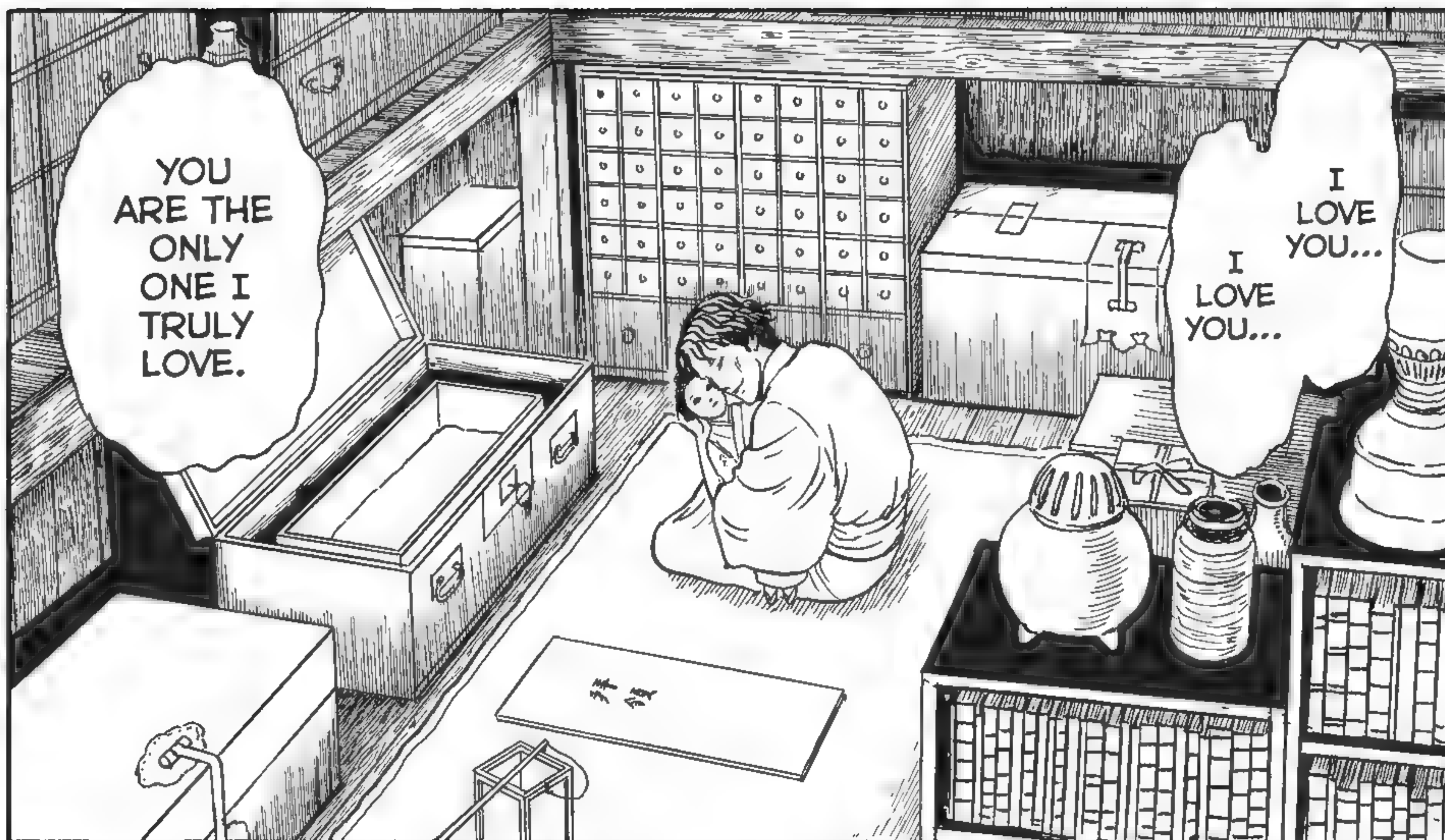
...

THE SHEER VERISIMILITUDE OF IT WAS SUCH THAT IT MADE ME GASP AND SHUDDER.

WHAT EXACTLY WAS THIS? MY HUSBAND WAS IN LOVE WITH A COLD, LIFELESS DOLL.

I LOVE YOU.

I LOVE YOU.

I LOVE YOU...

I LOVE YOU...
I LOVE YOU...
YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE I TRULY LOVE.
I'D BE A WRECK WITHOUT YOU.
WITH KYOKO, I'M SIMPLY A WRECK.
AAAH ...
I'M FILLED WITH SUCH JOY.

FLAP

SHF SHF

AAAH ...

I LOVE YOU...

I TRULY LOVE YOU.

I LOVE YOU.

YOU BEAST ...

YOU DIS- GUSTING ANIMAL...

SHF

I WAITED AND WAITED, BUT MY HUSBAND DID NOT RETURN.

HOW LONG DID I SIT THERE THAT NIGHT?

PERHAPS HIS PARTNER WAS NOT ACTUALLY THE DOLL...

...BUT INSTEAD A LIVING HUMAN BEING.

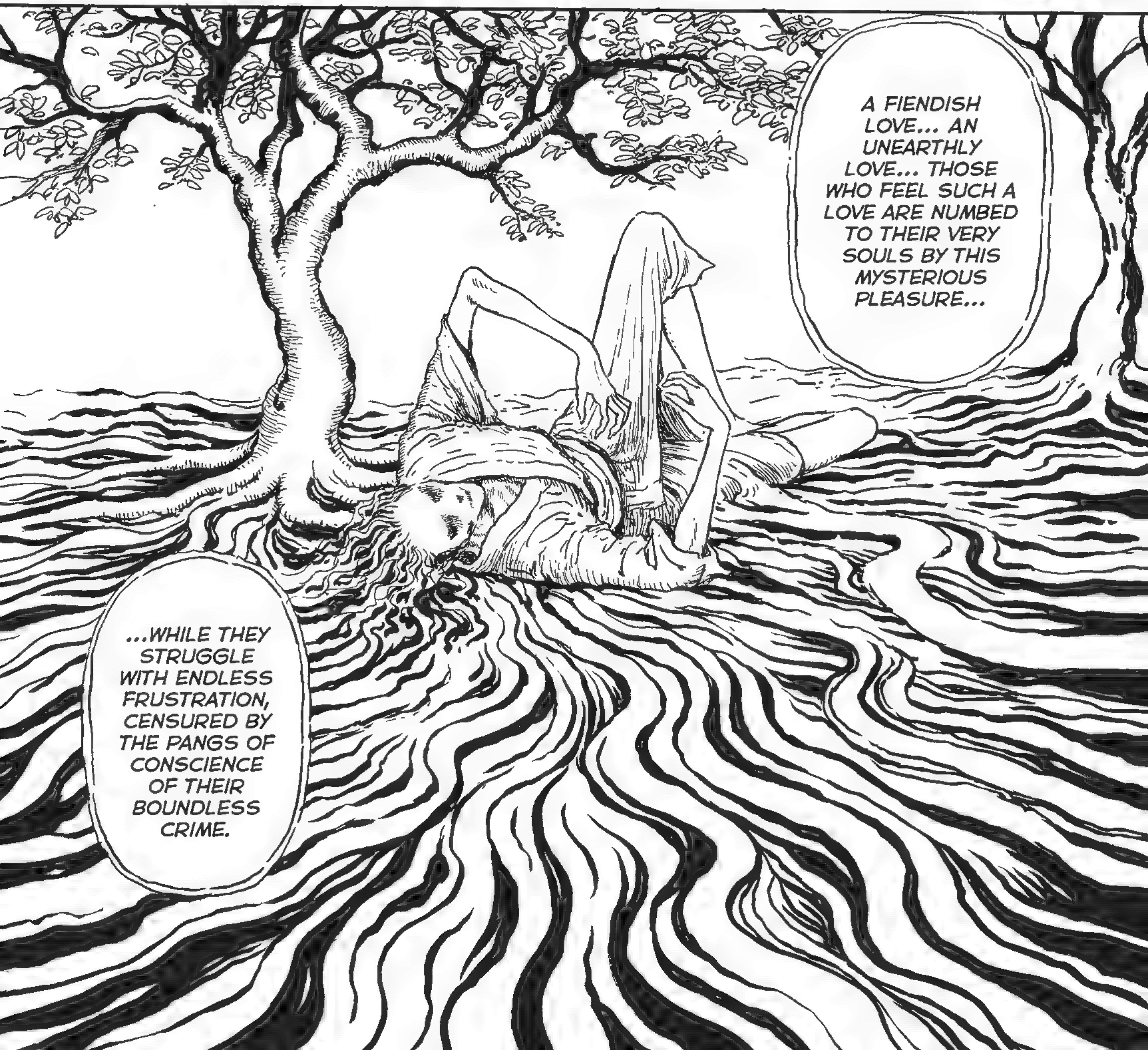
SO WHY DID HE NOT RETURN?

ONCE HE SAW THE BROKEN DOLL, THERE SHOULD HAVE BEEN NOTHING LEFT FOR HIM THERE.

AH, STRANGE ...

THE TRAP-DOOR IS OPEN.

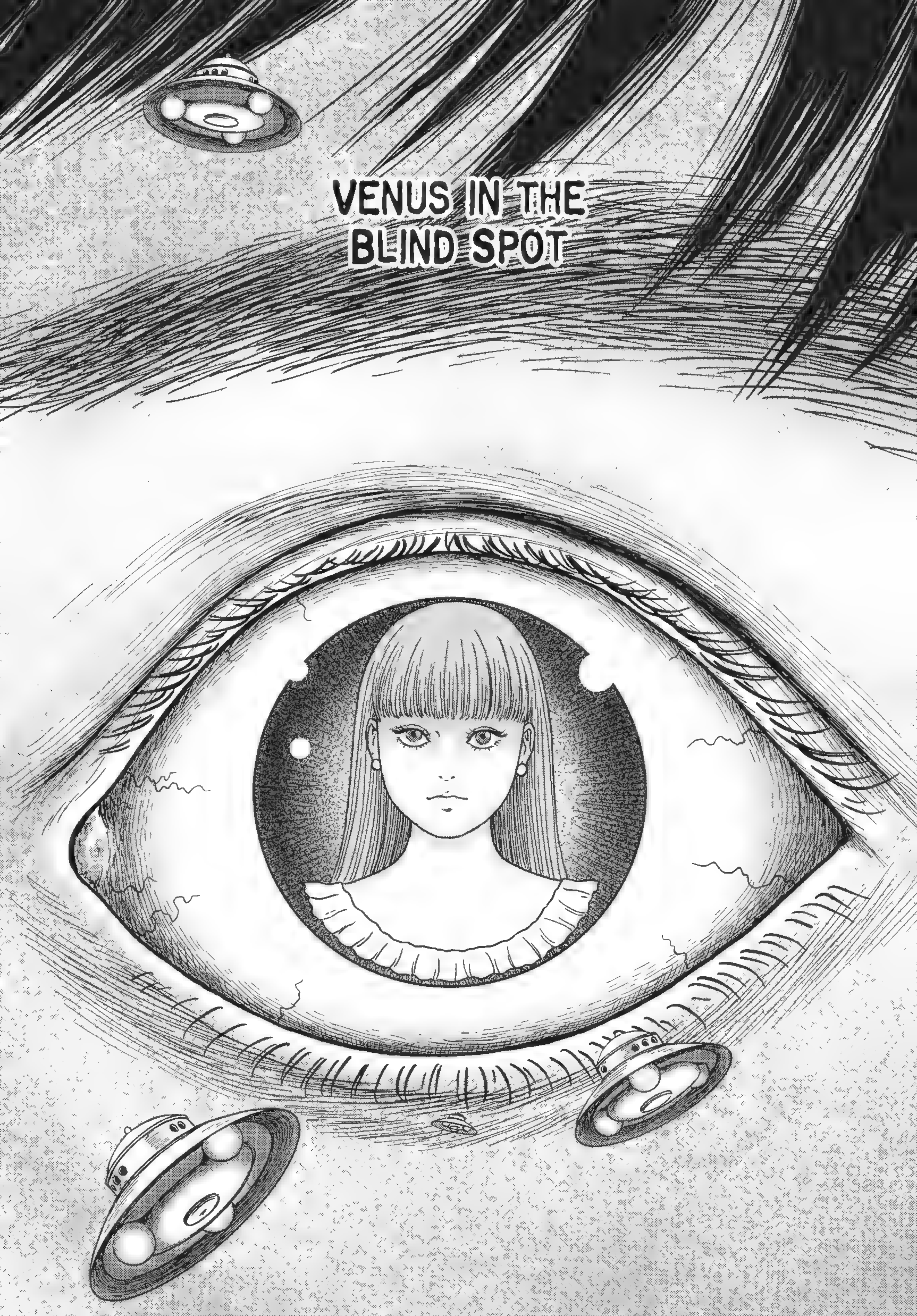
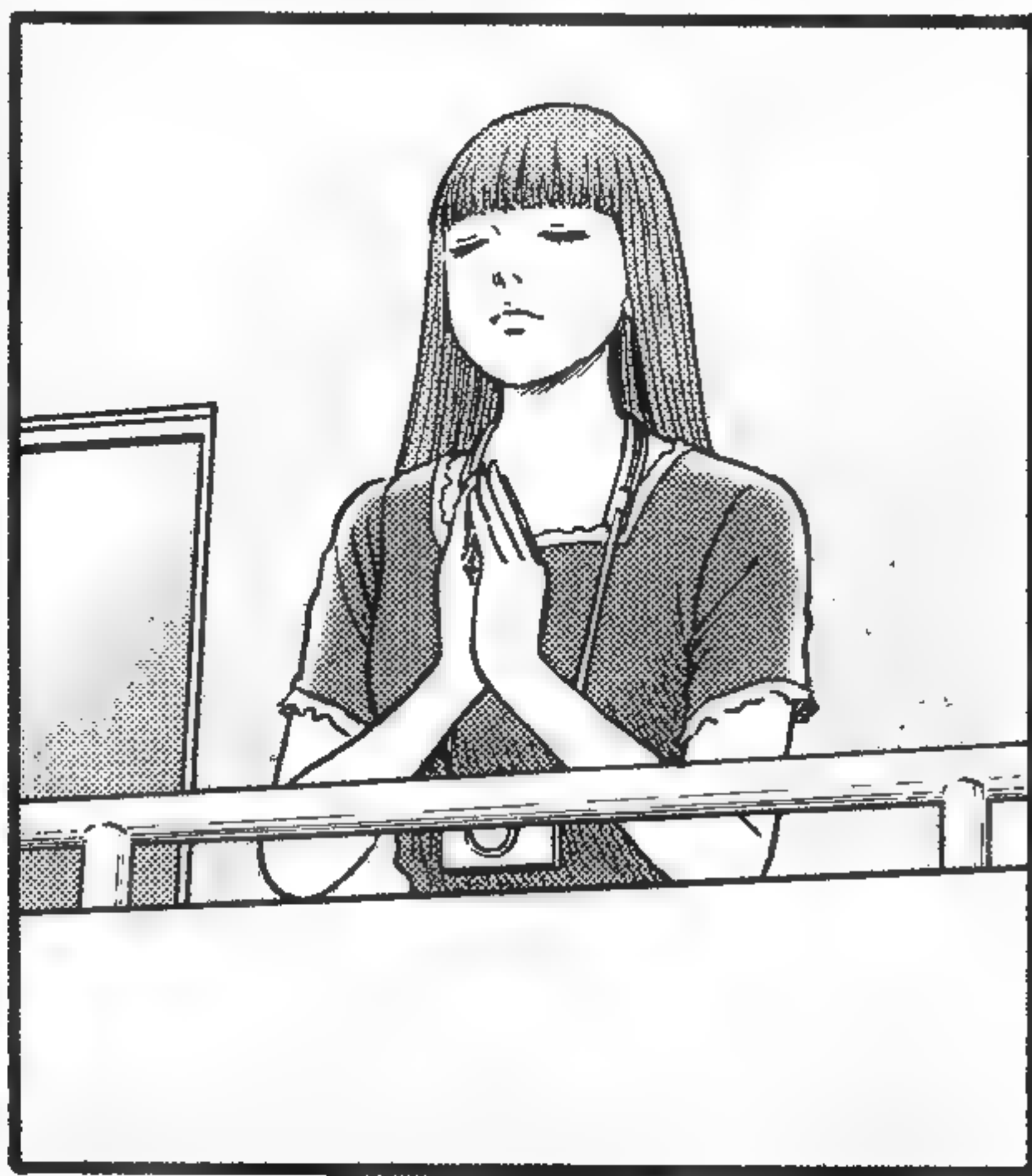
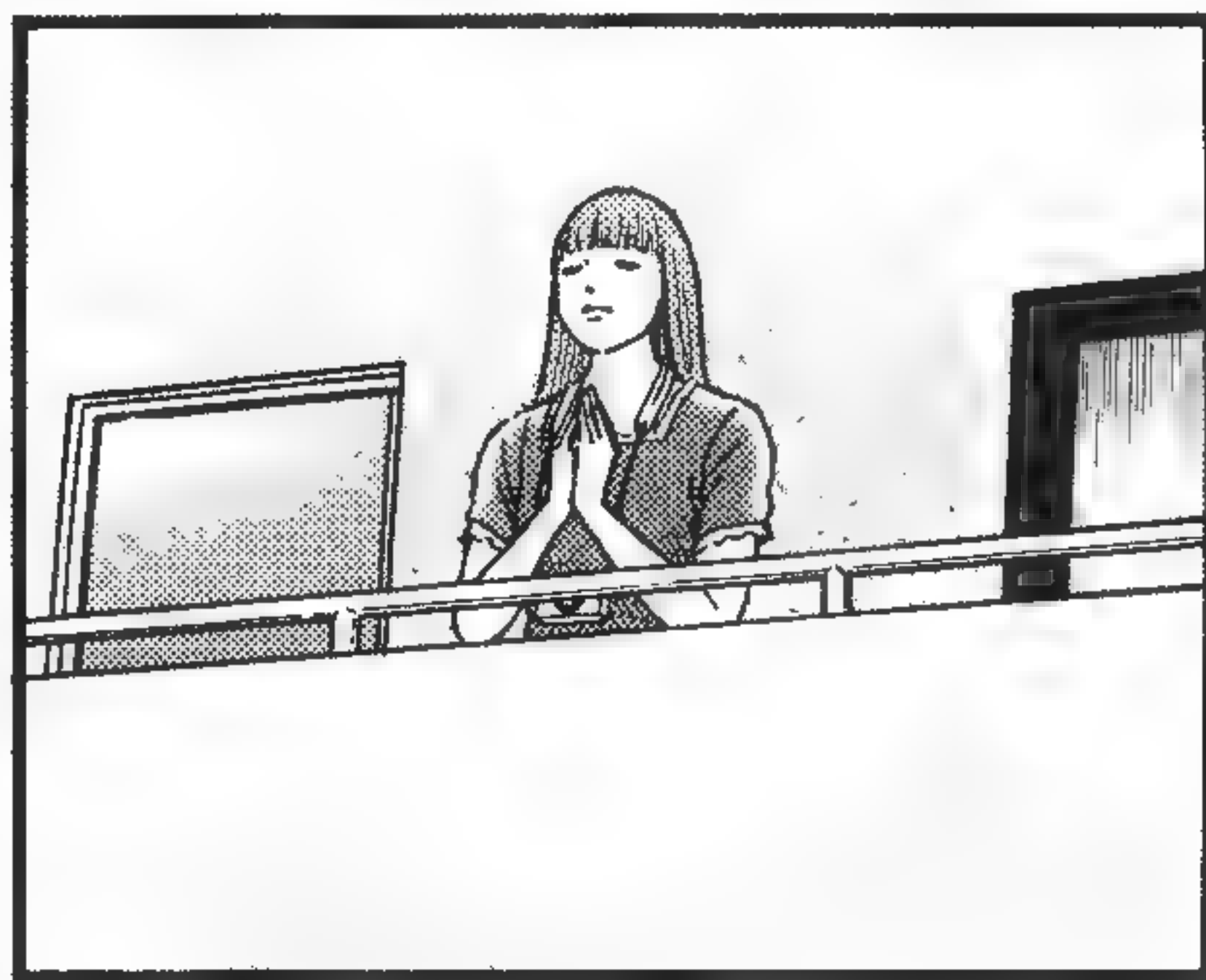
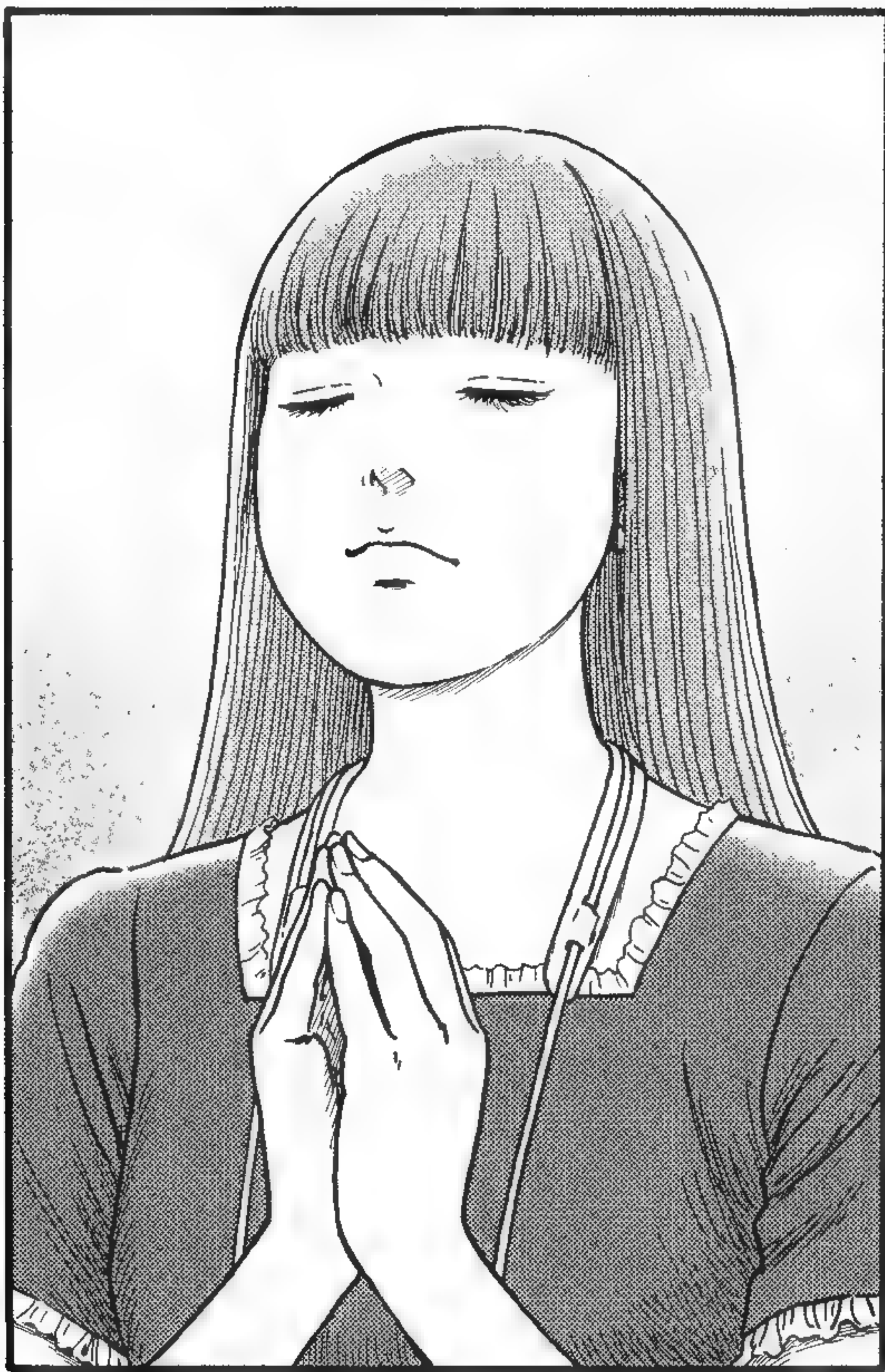
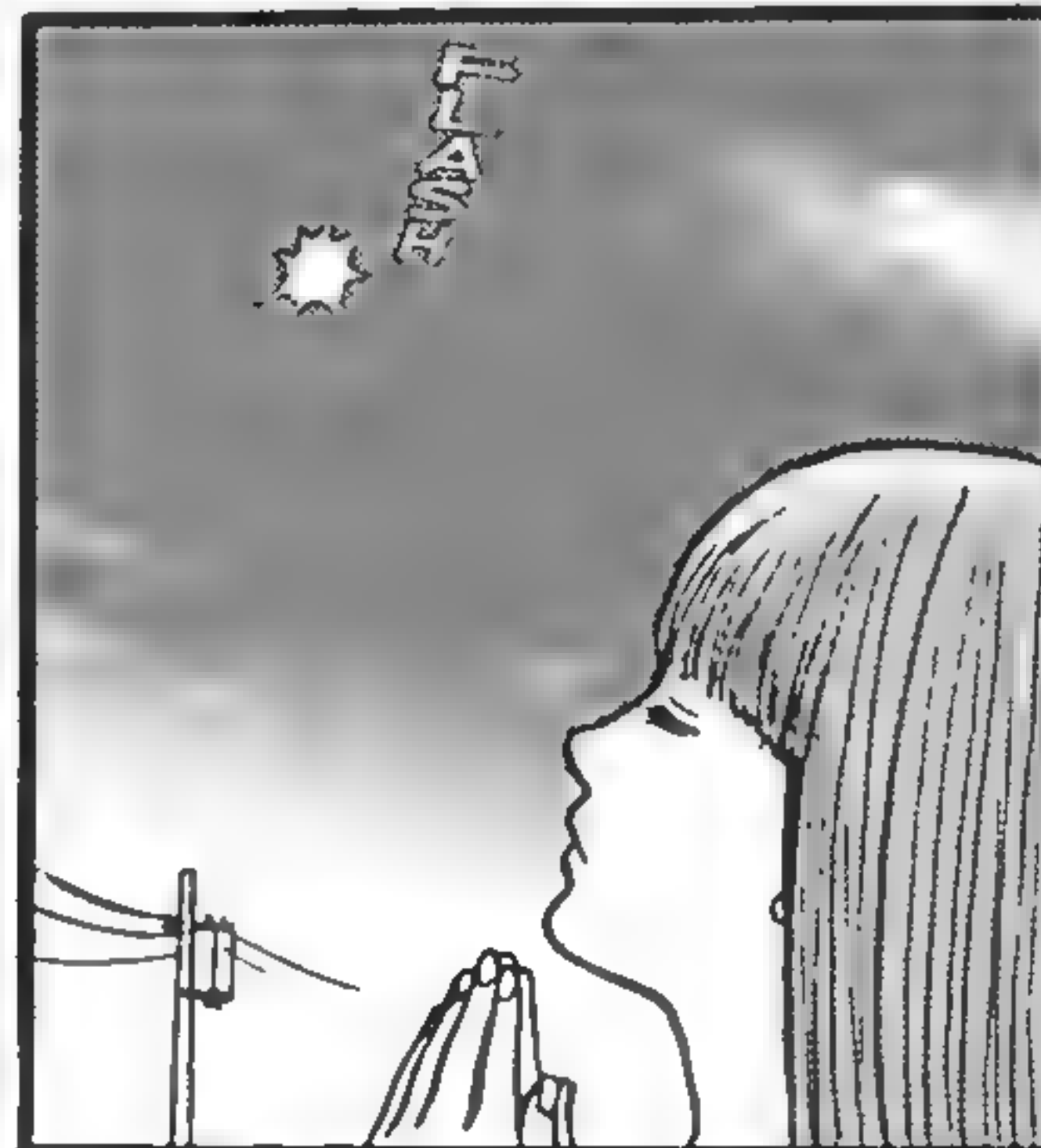
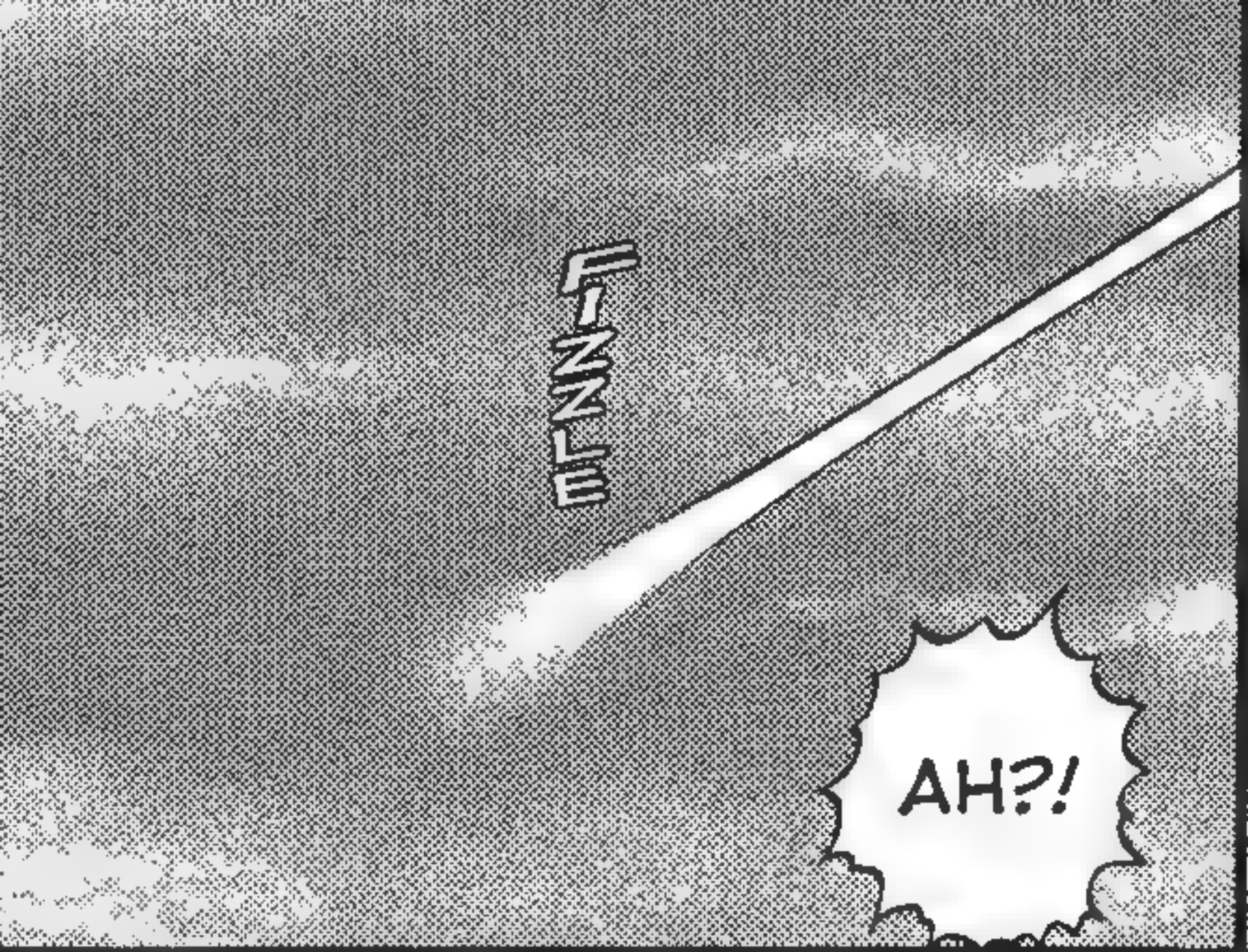
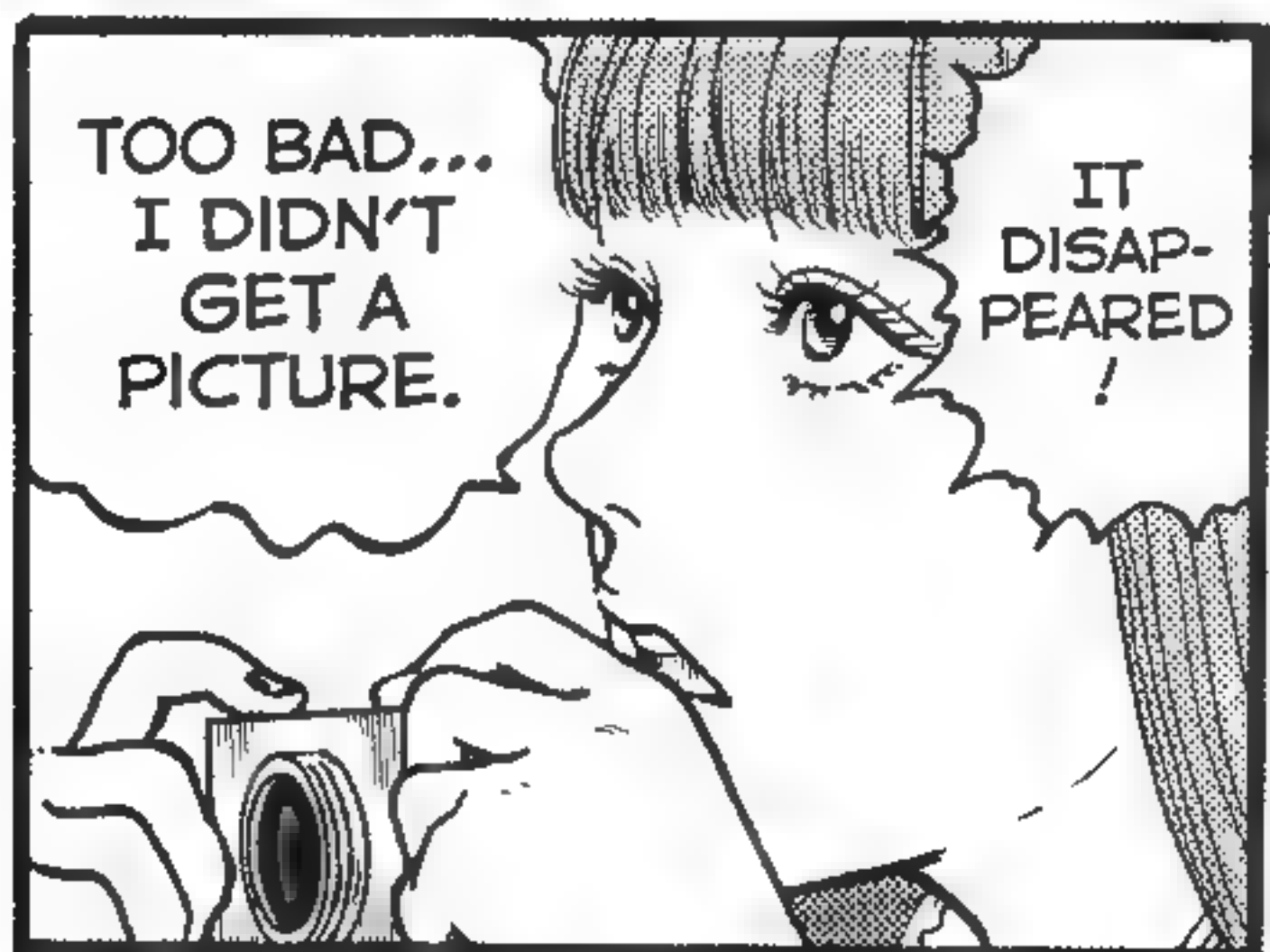
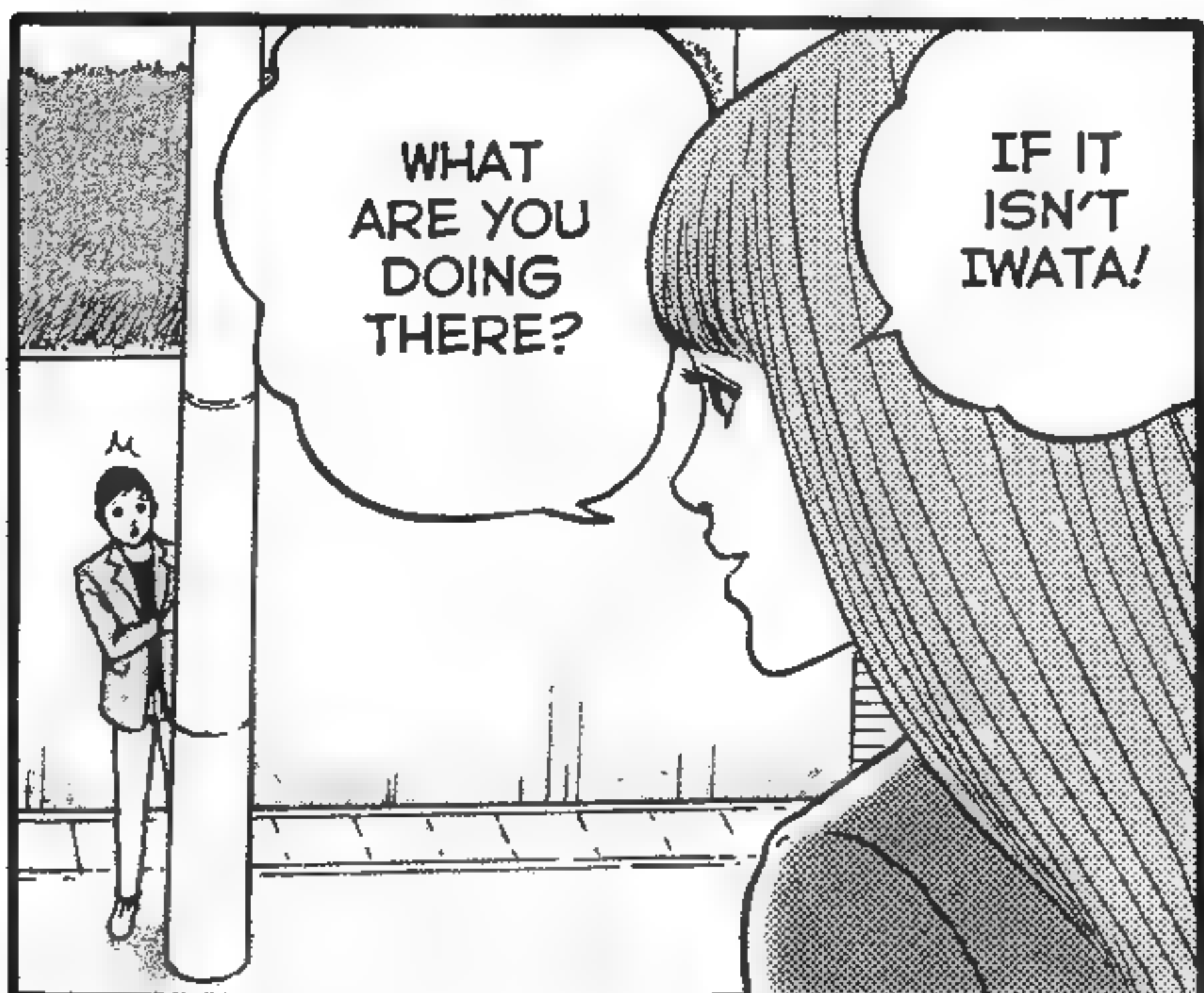
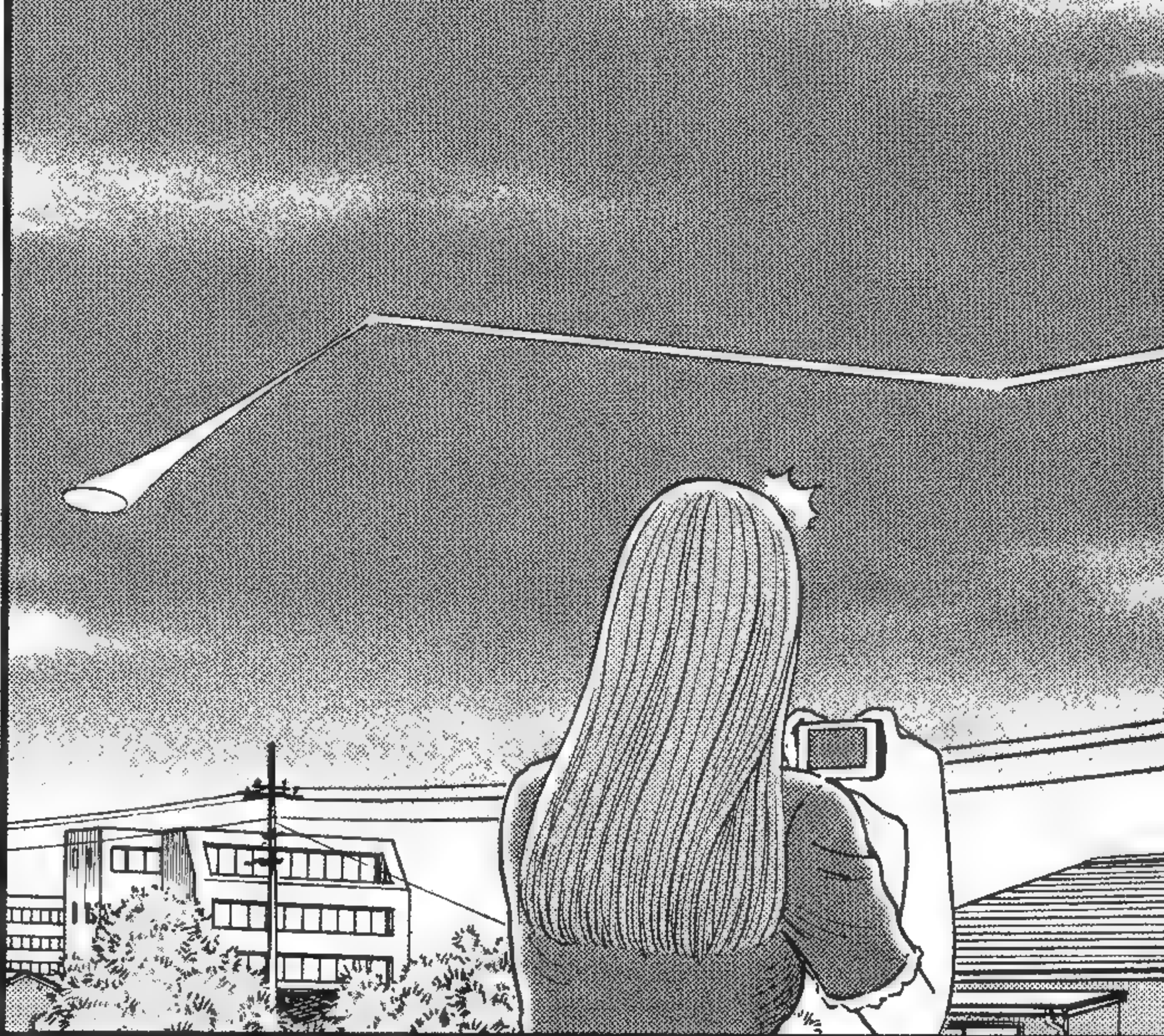
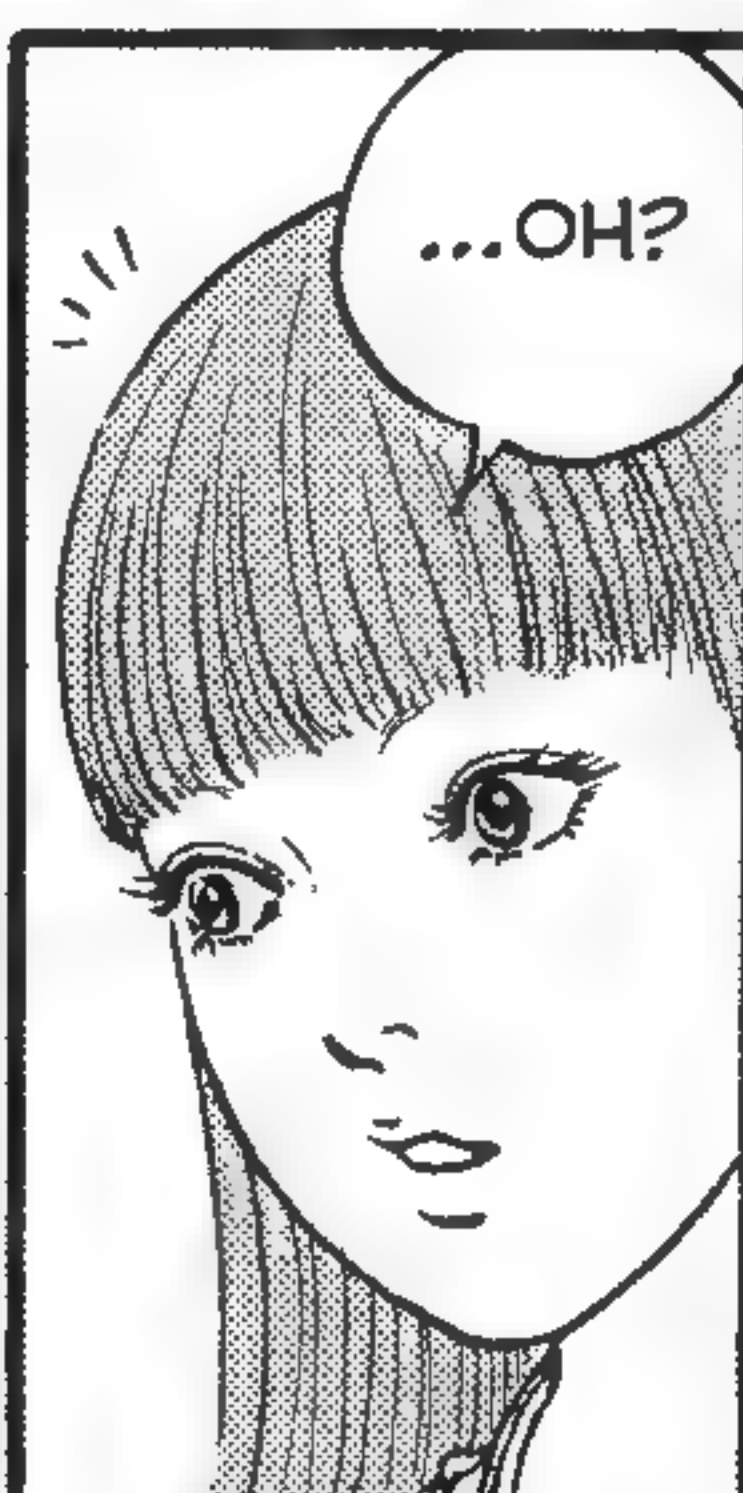
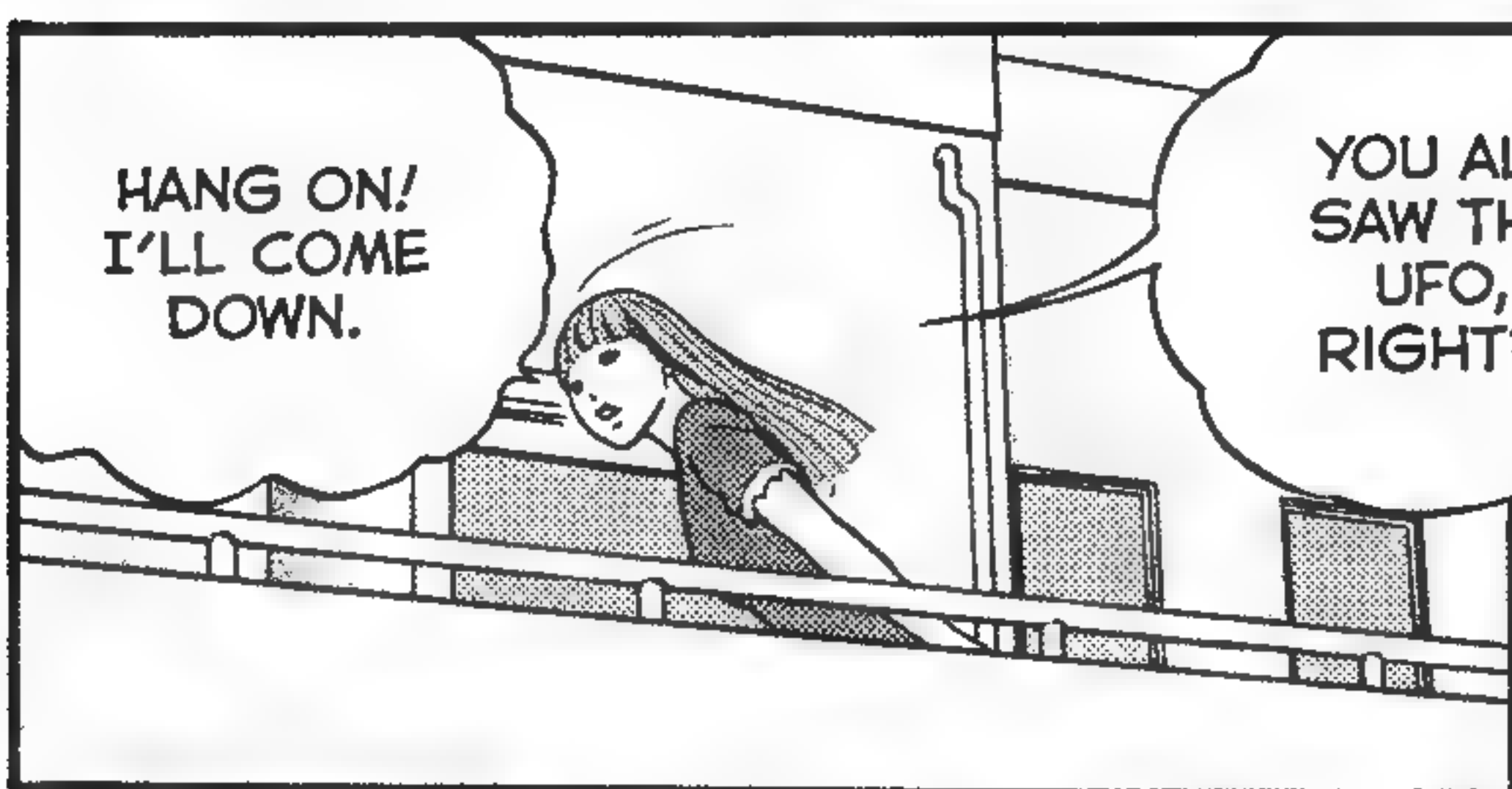
IN MY HUSBAND'S ARMS, THE DOLL...

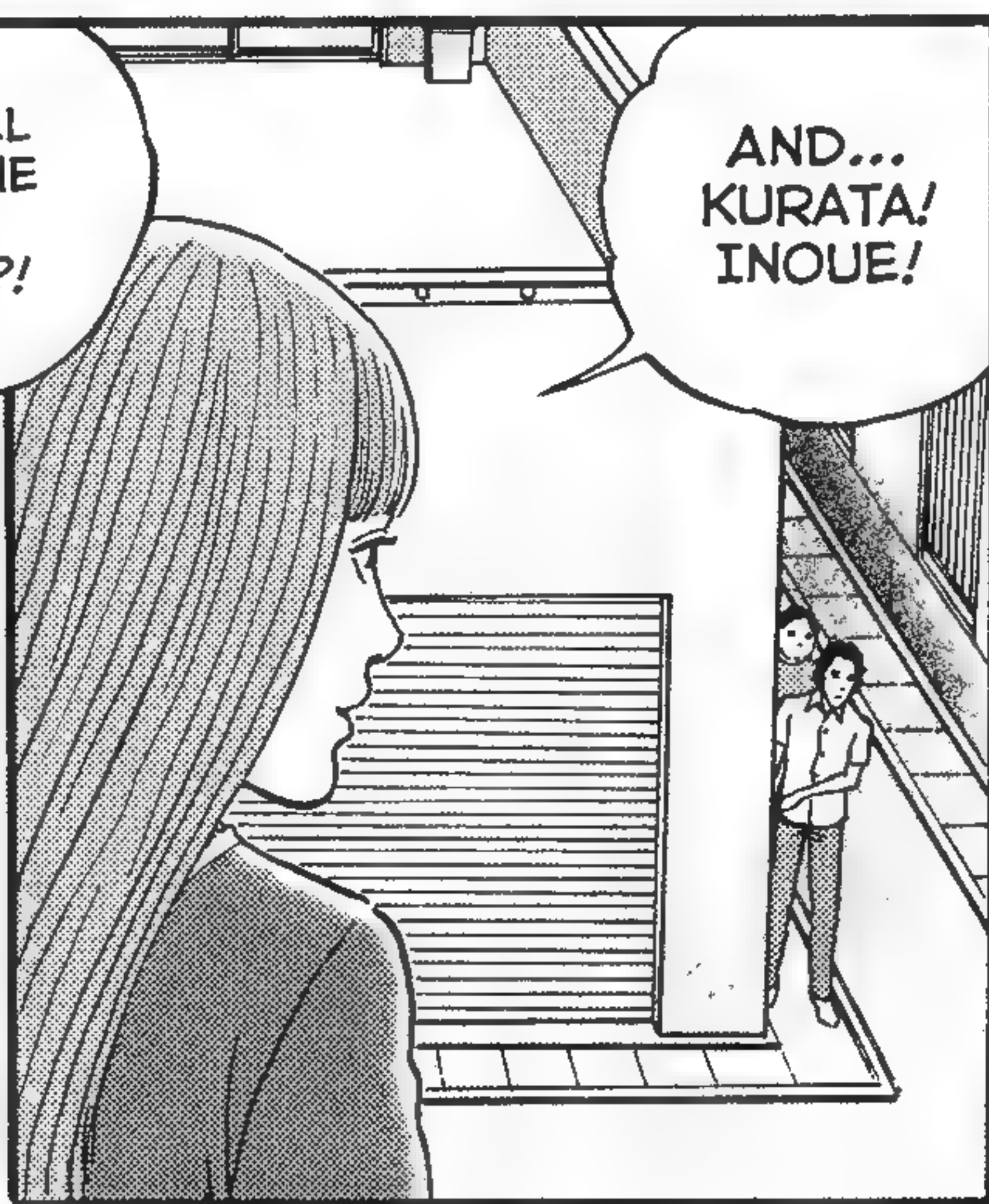
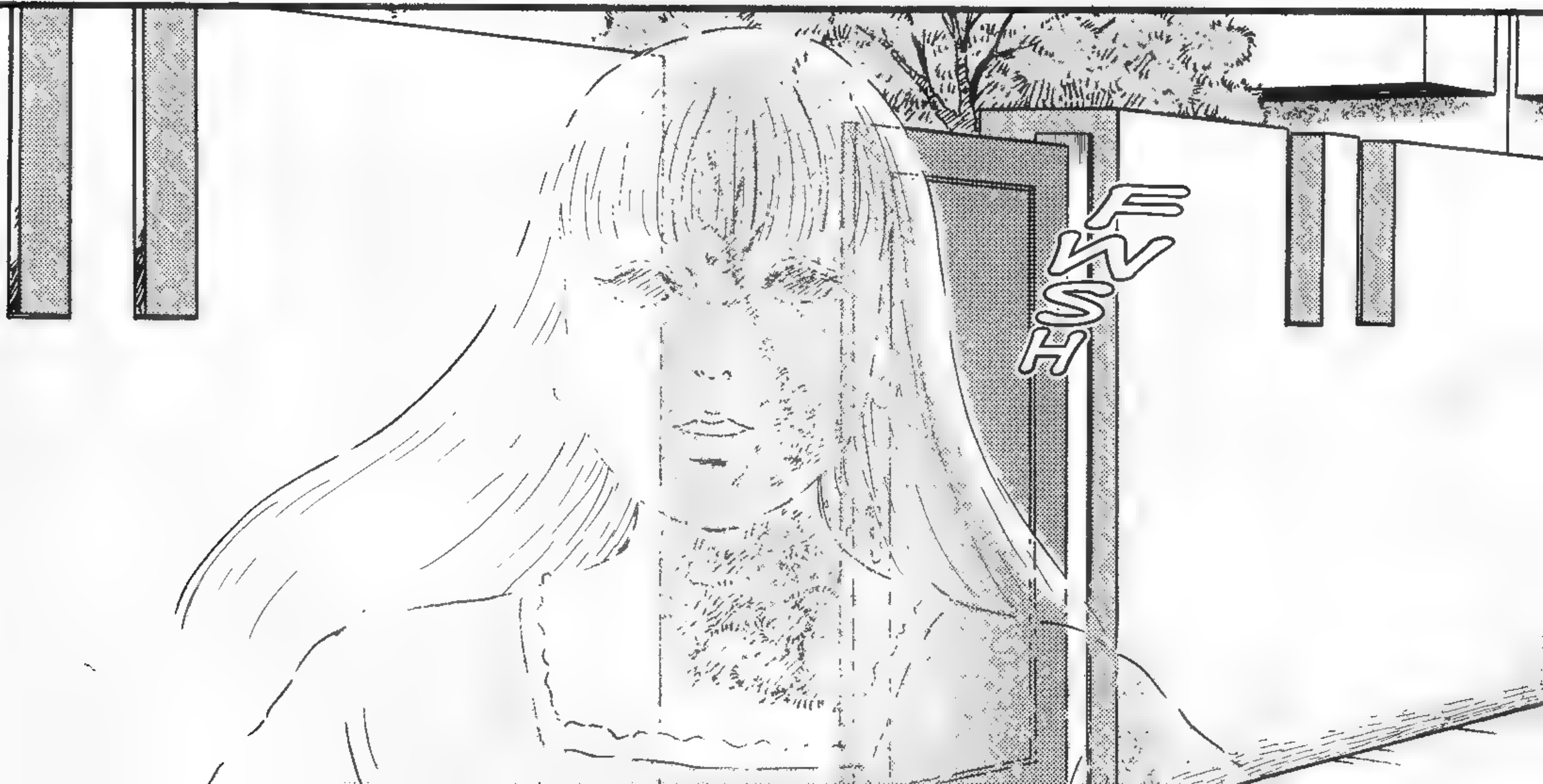
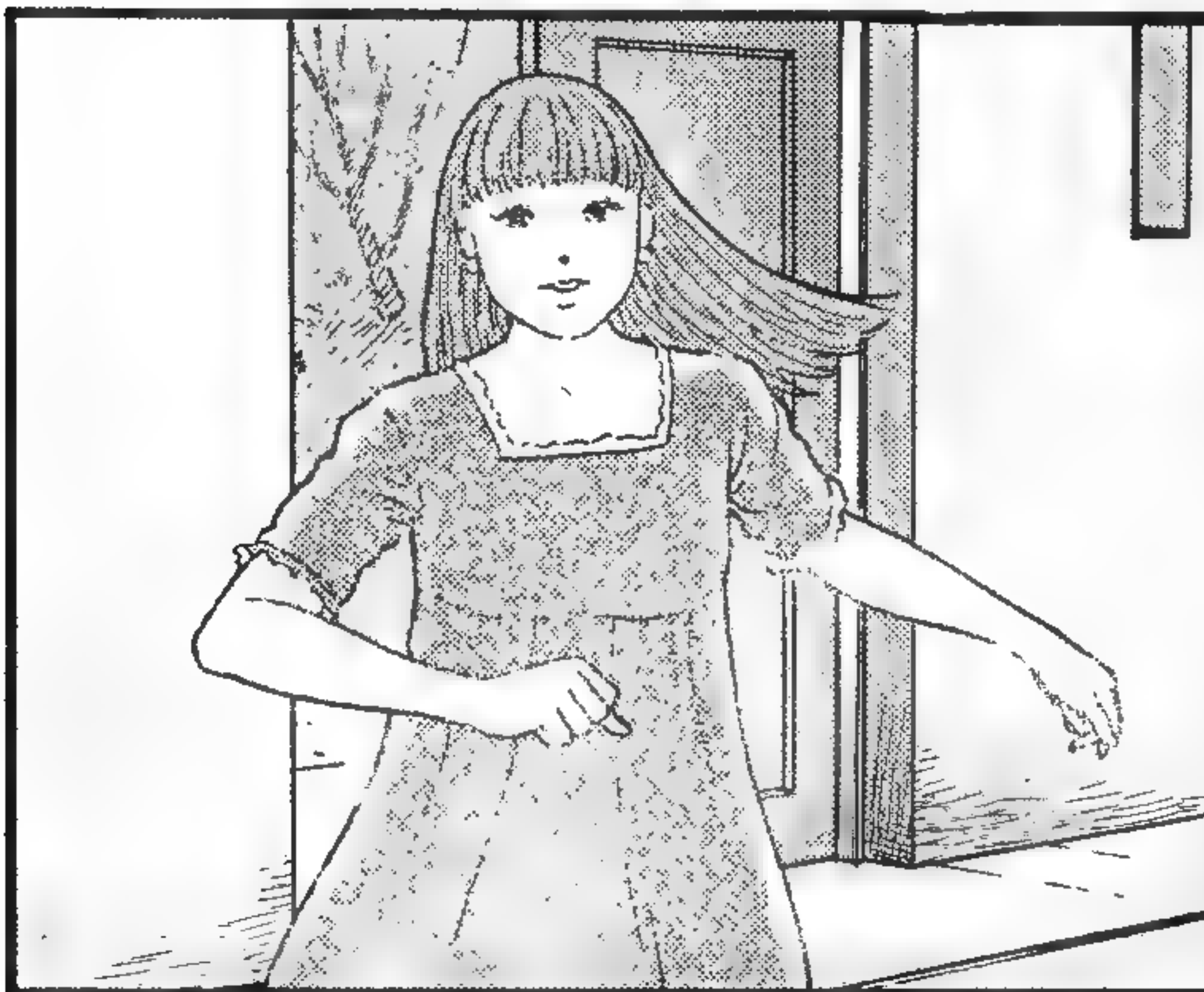
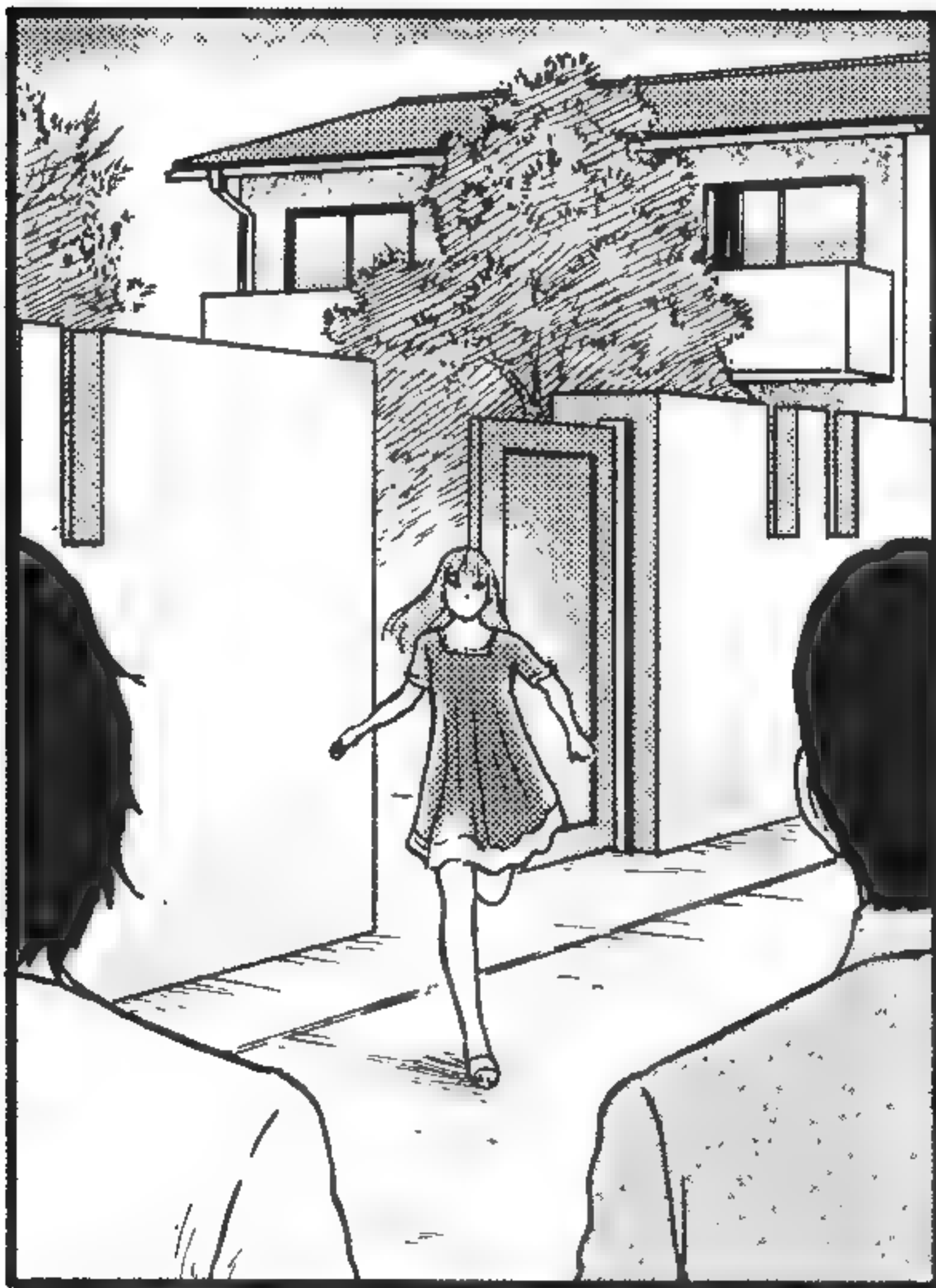
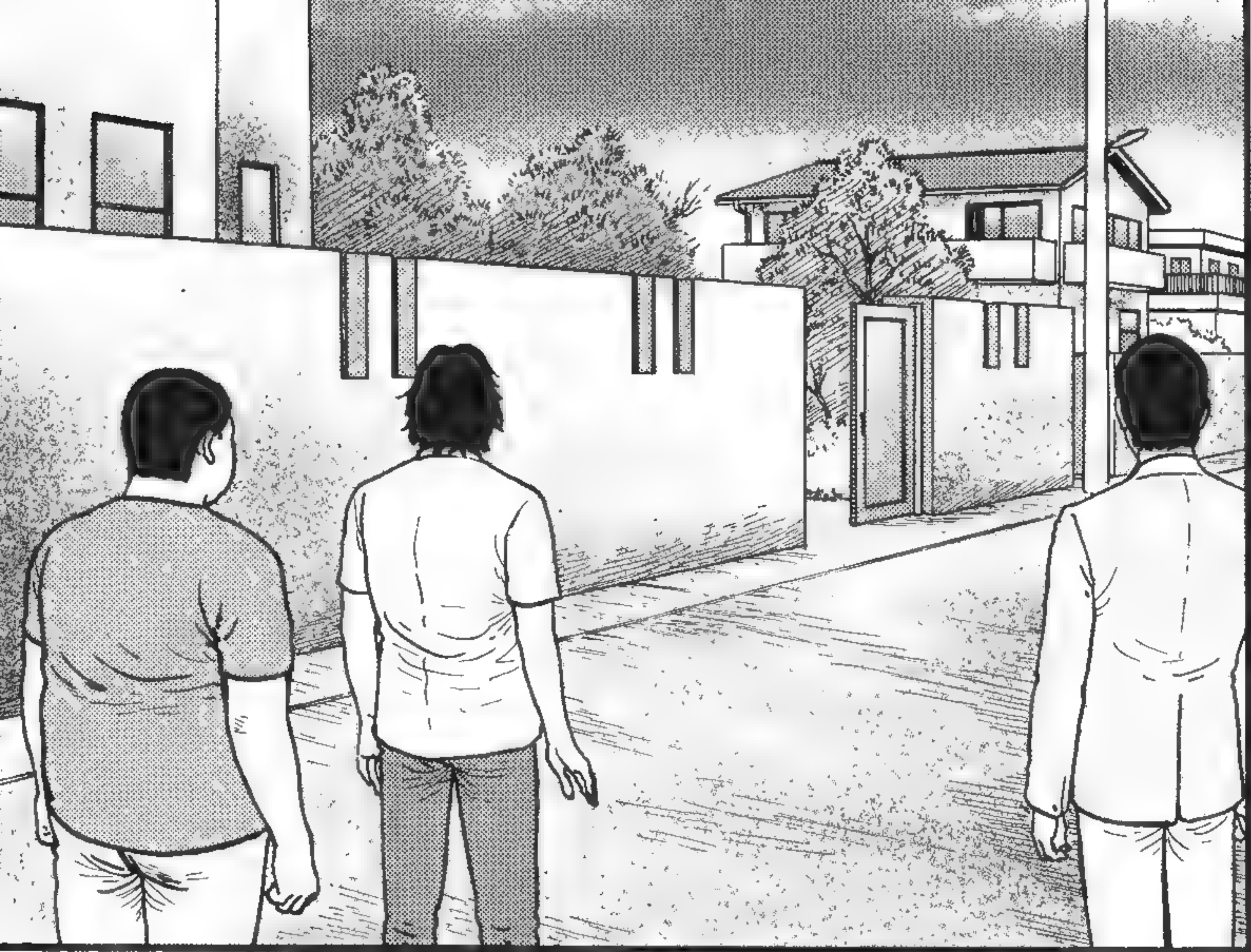
...WORE AN EERIE SMILE IN THE THROES OF DEATH.

A FIENDISH LOVE... AN UNEARTHLY LOVE... THOSE WHO FEEL SUCH A LOVE ARE NUMBED TO THEIR VERY SOULS BY THIS MYSTERIOUS PLEASURE...

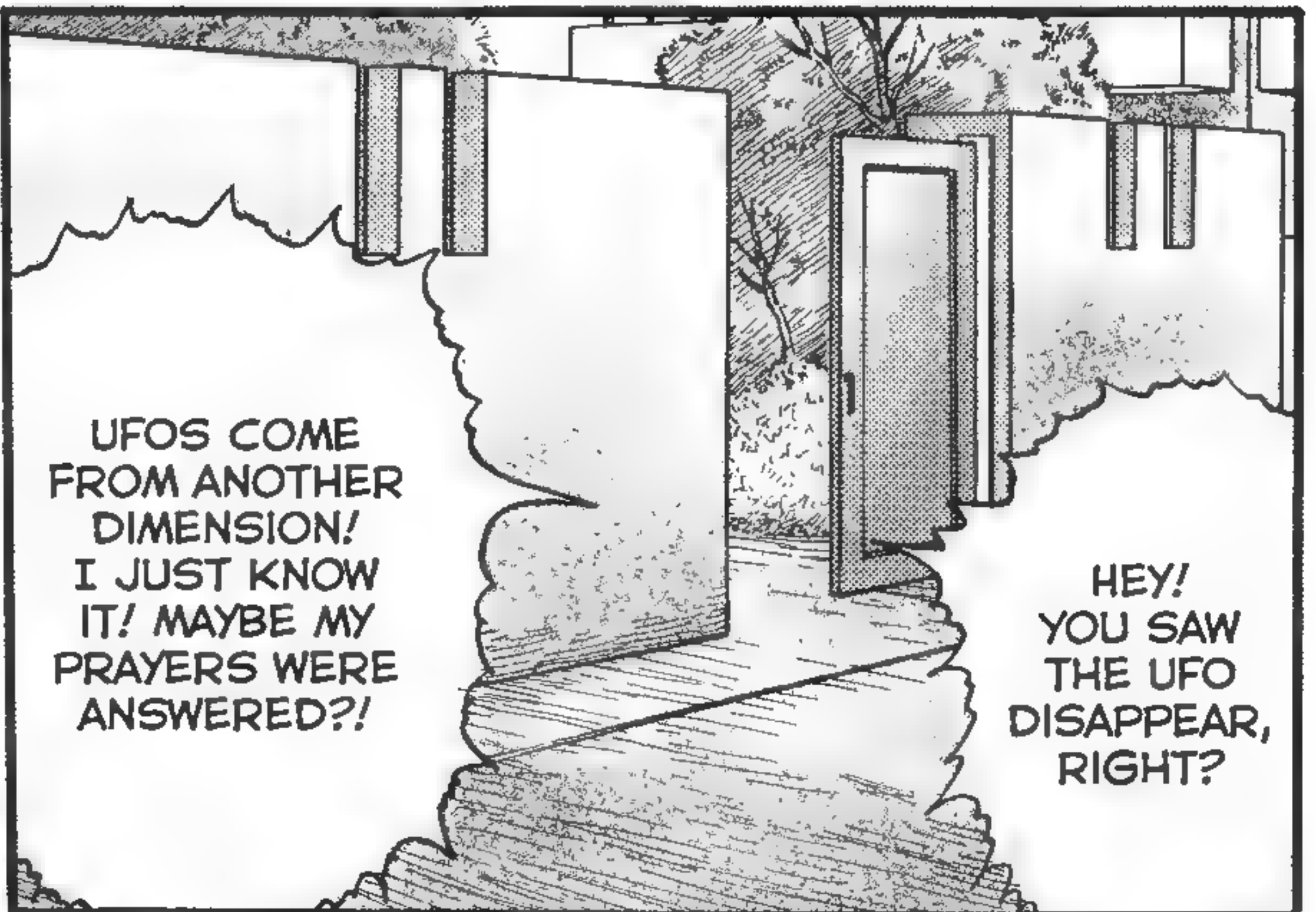
...WHILE THEY STRUGGLE WITH ENDLESS FRUSTRATION, CENSURED BY THE PANGS OF CONSCIENCE OF THEIR BOUNDLESS CRIME.

VENUS IN THE BLIND SPOT

FLASH

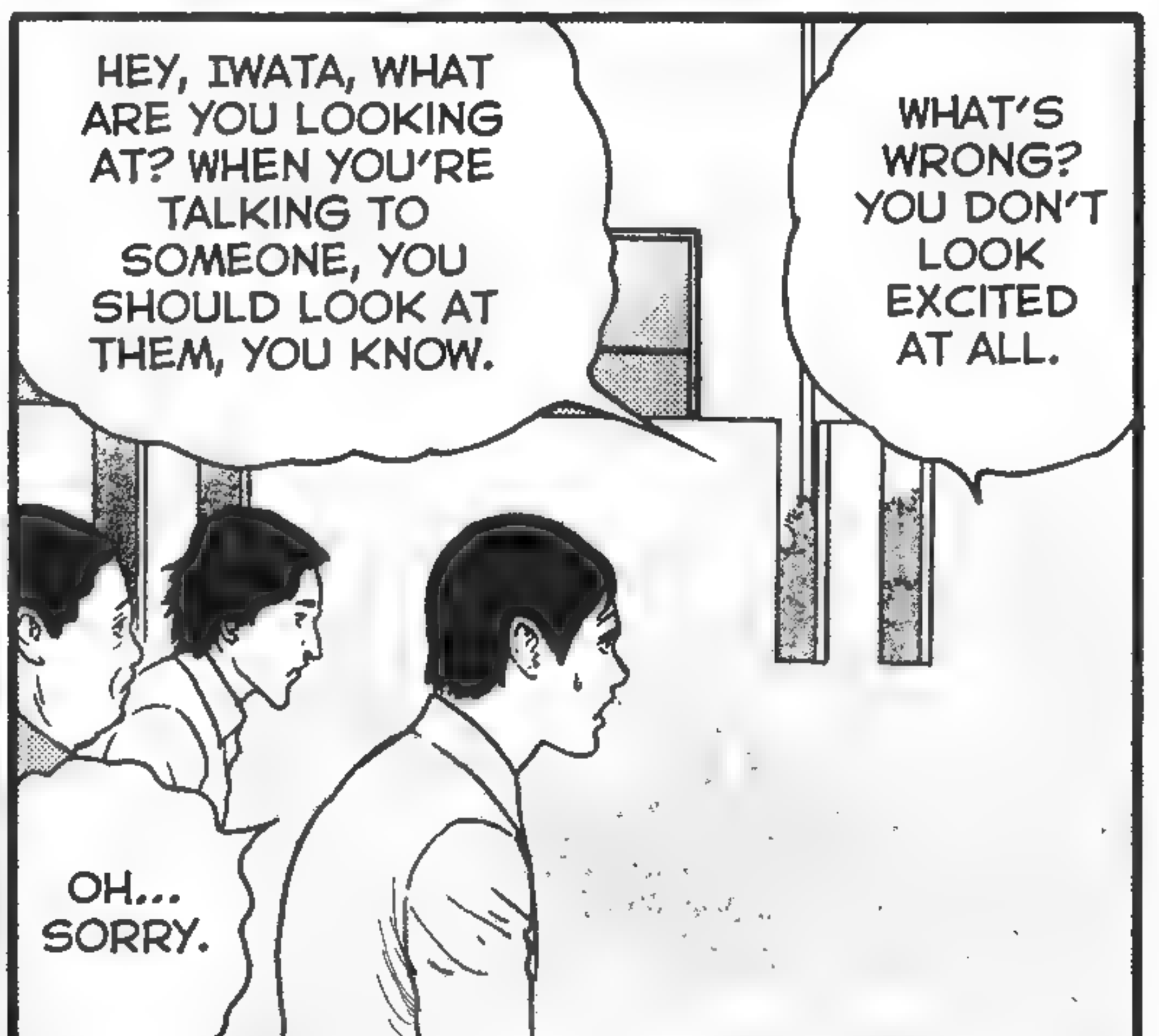
AH!

FIZZLE
AH?!
IT DISAPPEARED!
TOO BAD... I DIDN'T GET A PICTURE.
IF IT ISN'T IWATA!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE?
...OH?
MY PRAYERS WERE ANSWERED.
BUT THAT'S THE FIRST ONE IN A WHILE.
AND... KURATA! INOUE!
YOU ALL SAW THE UFO, RIGHT?!
HANG ON! I'LL COME DOWN.
...

I'M HERE!
FWSH

...

MARIKO ...

UH... UM.

UFOS COME FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION! I JUST KNOW IT! MAYBE MY PRAYERS WERE ANSWERED?!

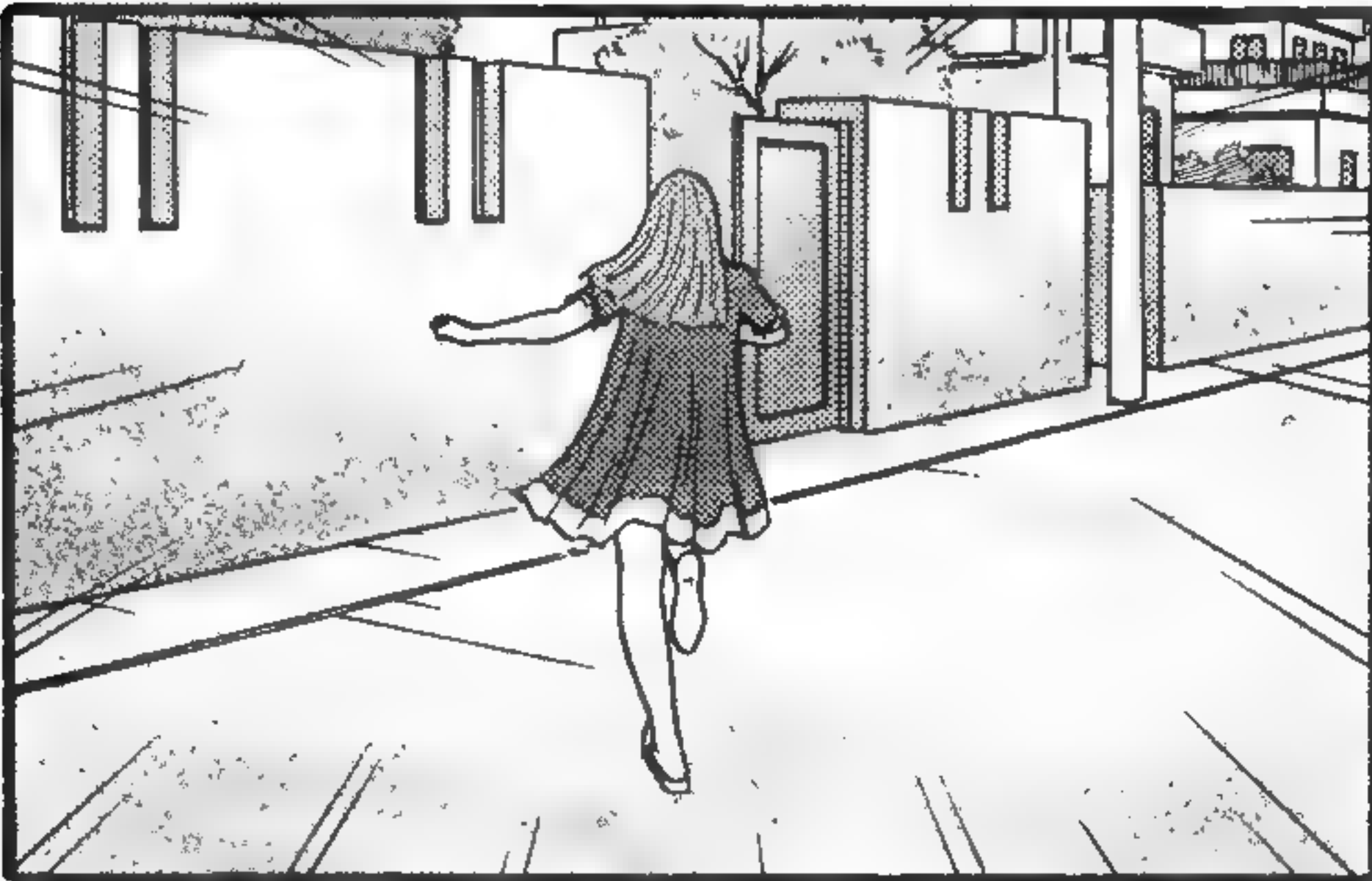
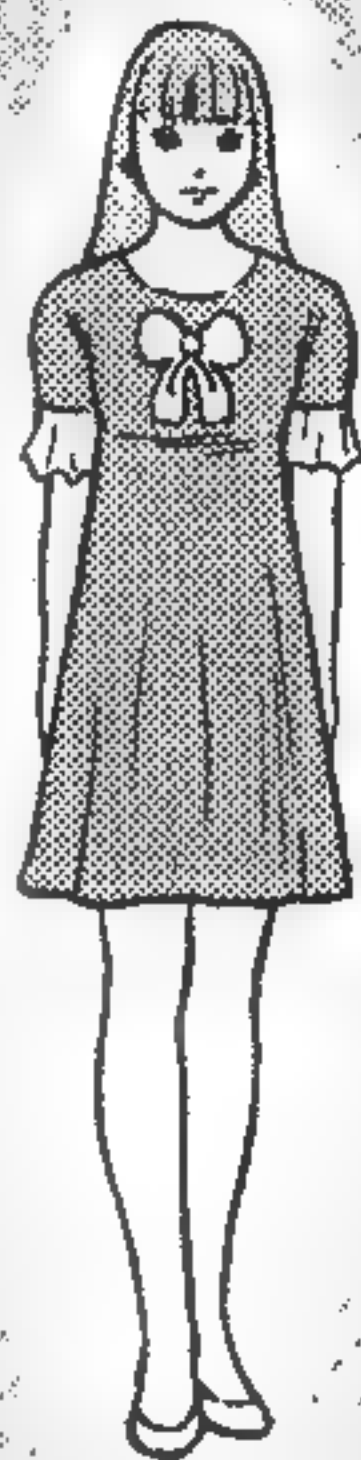
HEY! YOU SAW THE UFO DISAPPEAR, RIGHT?

HUH? DID YOU MAYBE NOT SEE THE UFO?

BUT YOU'RE MEMBERS OF THE NANZAN UFO RESEARCH SOCIETY!

HEY, IWATA, WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT? WHEN YOU'RE TALKING TO SOMEONE, YOU SHOULD LOOK AT THEM, YOU KNOW.

WHAT'S WRONG? YOU DON'T LOOK EXCITED AT ALL.

OH... SORRY.

BYE!
OKAY.
WELL, WHATEVER. I HAVE TO GO PUT TOGETHER A WITNESS REPORT.
I'LL SEE YOU GUYS AT THE NEXT MEETING.
...
THEY COULDN'T SEE HER, EITHER...
GLANCE

I CAN SEE HER FROM A DISTANCE, BUT SHE VANISHES THE INSTANT SHE GETS UP CLOSE.

I WONDER WHEN IT STARTED. WHEN DID MARIKO SHONO START DISAPPEARING FROM VIEW?

BECAUSE WE LOVE HER TOO MUCH?

WHY, THOUGH?

WEIRDLY, IT SEEMS LIKE OTHER PEOPLE CAN ACTUALLY SEE HER.

EVERYONE EXCEPT ME AND A FEW MEN...

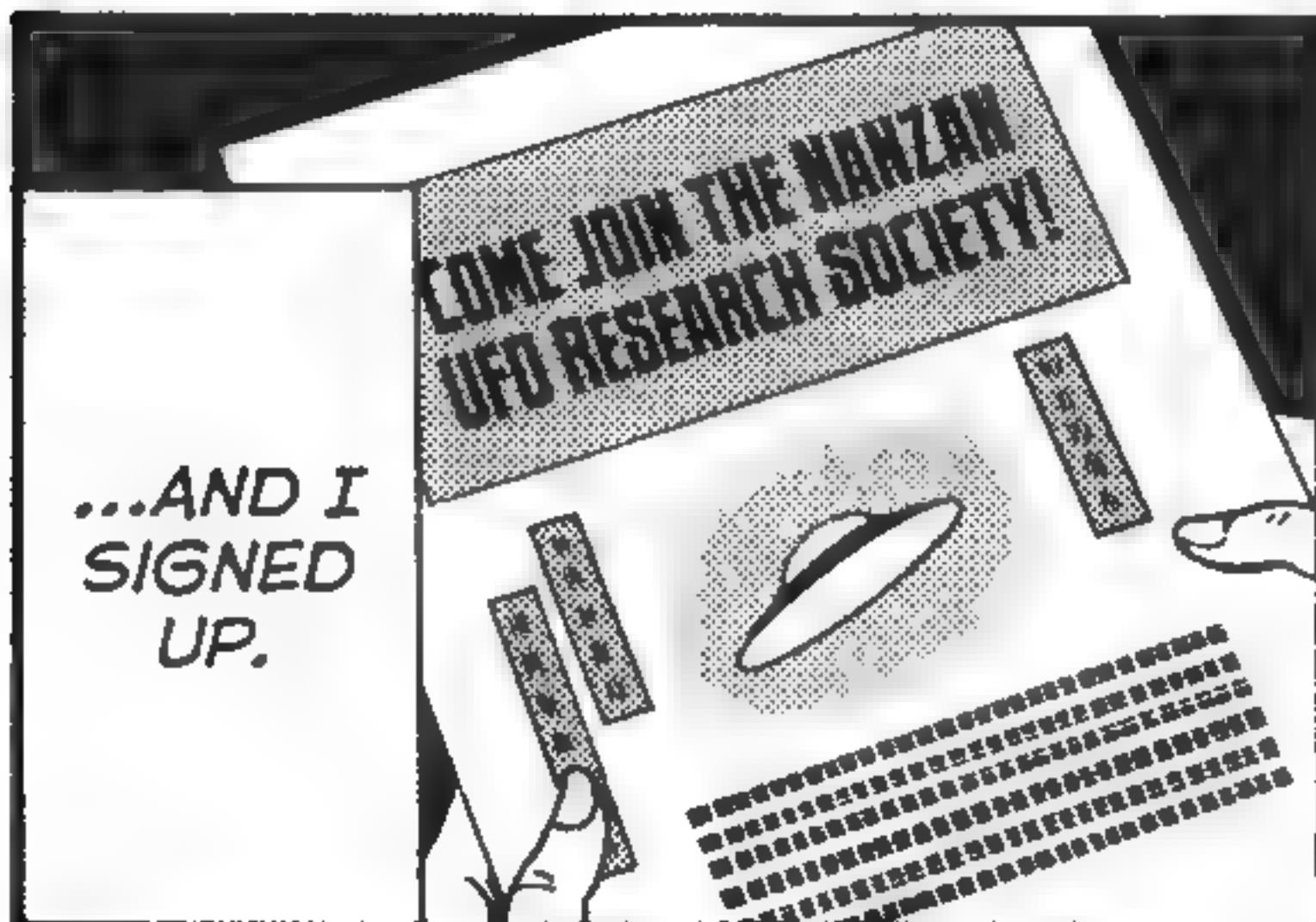
I CAN'T EVEN SEE THE PERSON I LOVE THE MOST UP CLOSE!

AAH, IT'S TOO CRUEL.

First Nanzan Municipal UFO Symposium

I FIRST SAW MARIKO AT A UFO SYMPOSIUM HELD BY THE CITY.

MARIKO SHONO WAS THERE WITH HER FATHER.

THERE ARE A LOT OF SIGHTINGS IN NANZAN, SO IT'S BECOME FAMOUS AS THE UFO TOWN.

SOON AFTER CAME THE LAUNCH OF WHAT WOULD BECOME THE NANZAN UFO RESEARCH SOCIETY...

COME JOIN THE NANZAN UFO RESEARCH SOCIETY!

...AND I SIGNED UP.

SHE WAS STUNNING, WITH THIS AURA ABOUT HER.

SHE STOLE MY HEART AT FIRST GLANCE.

NANZAN UFO RESEARCH SOCIETY LAUNCH PARTY

THE FOUNDER OF THE GROUP WAS NONE OTHER THAN ASAO SHONO—MARIKO'S FATHER!

A DOCTOR BY TRADE, HE WAS AN UNPARALLELED UFO OBSESSIVE, BUT HIS DAUGHTER MARIKO MANAGED TO HOLD HER OWN AGAINST HIM.

THE MEETINGS WERE ALWAYS AT THE SHONO HOUSE.

DESPITE BEING OUR YOUNGEST MEMBER, SHE SPOKE MORE PASSIONATELY THAN ANYONE ELSE ABOUT UFOS.

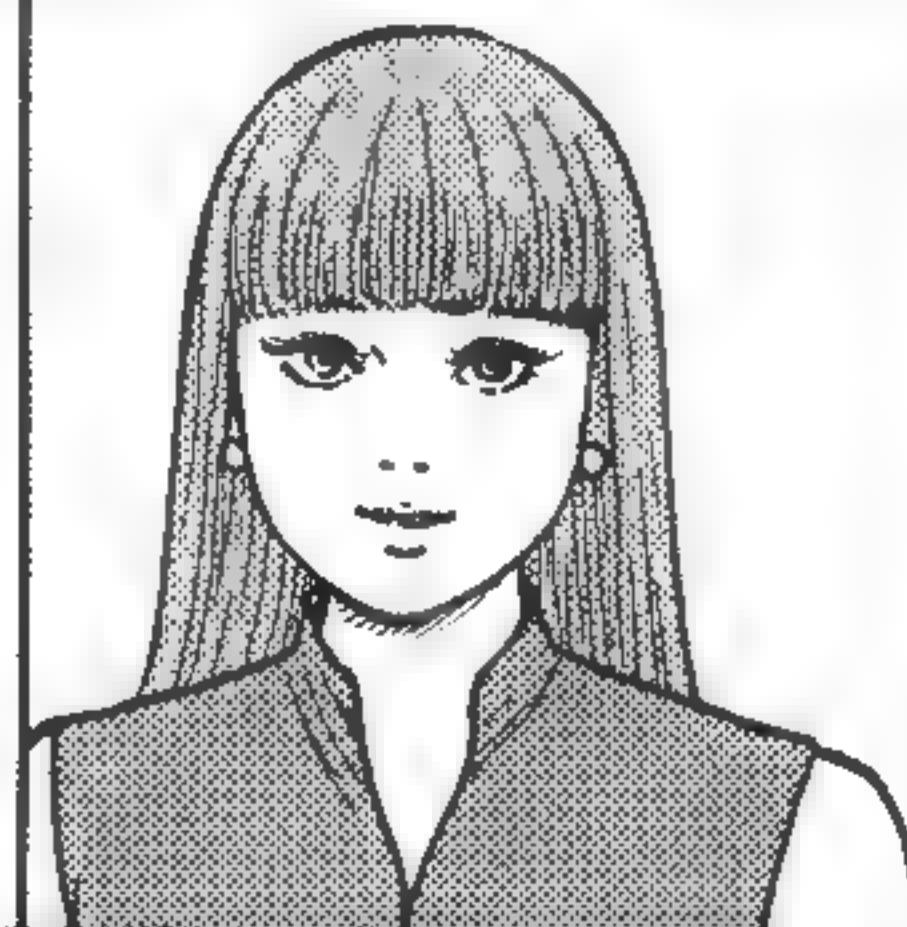
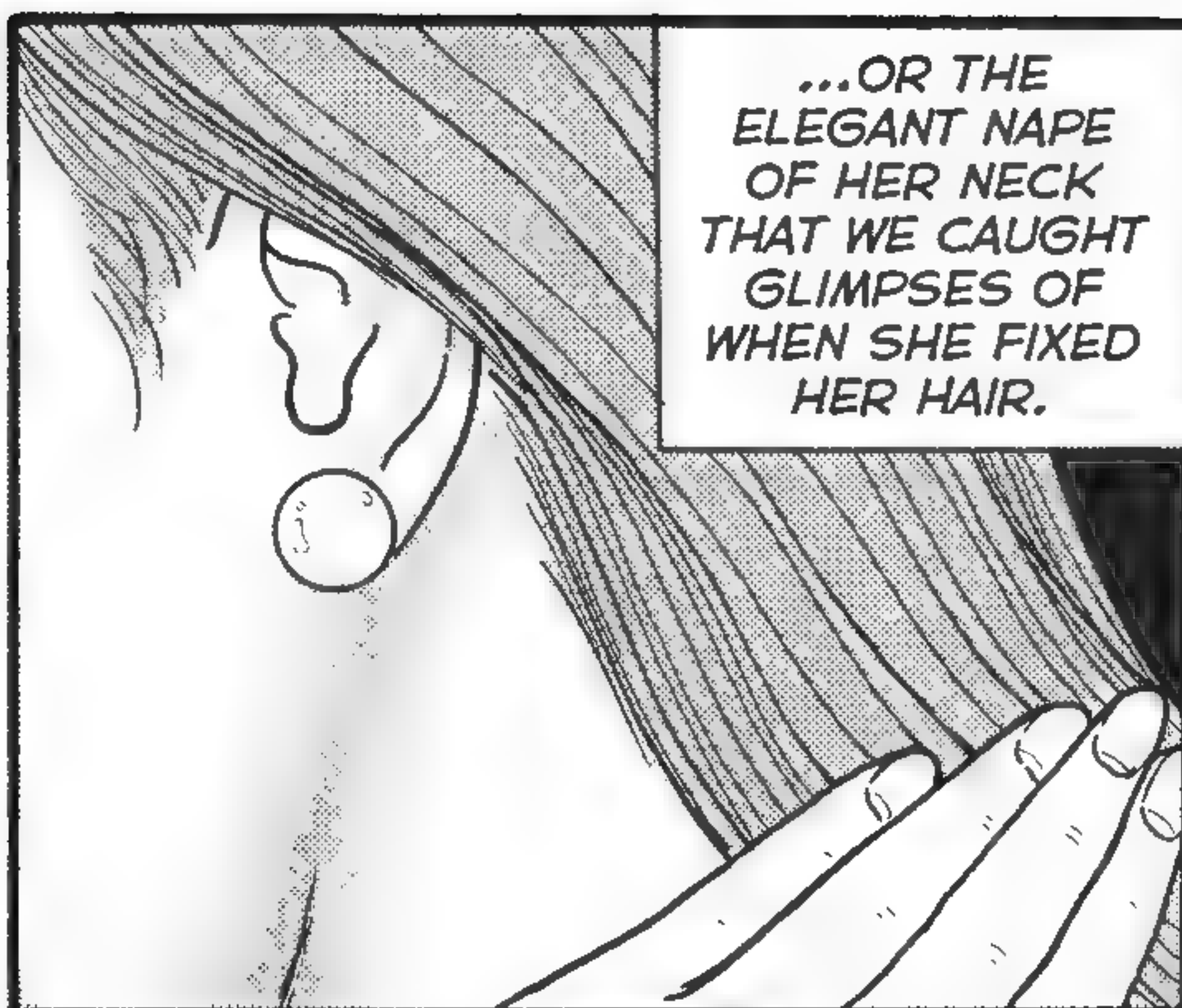
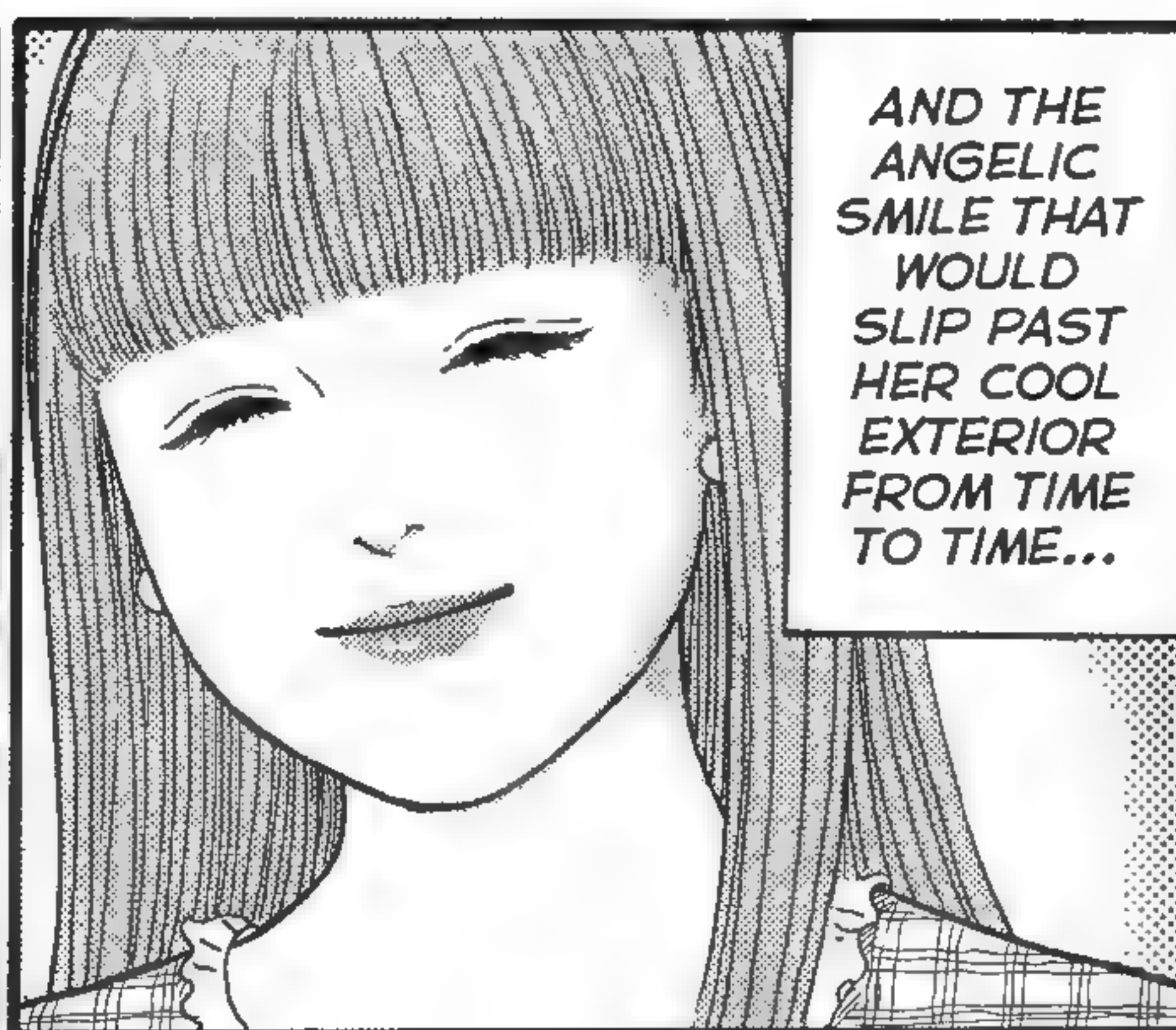
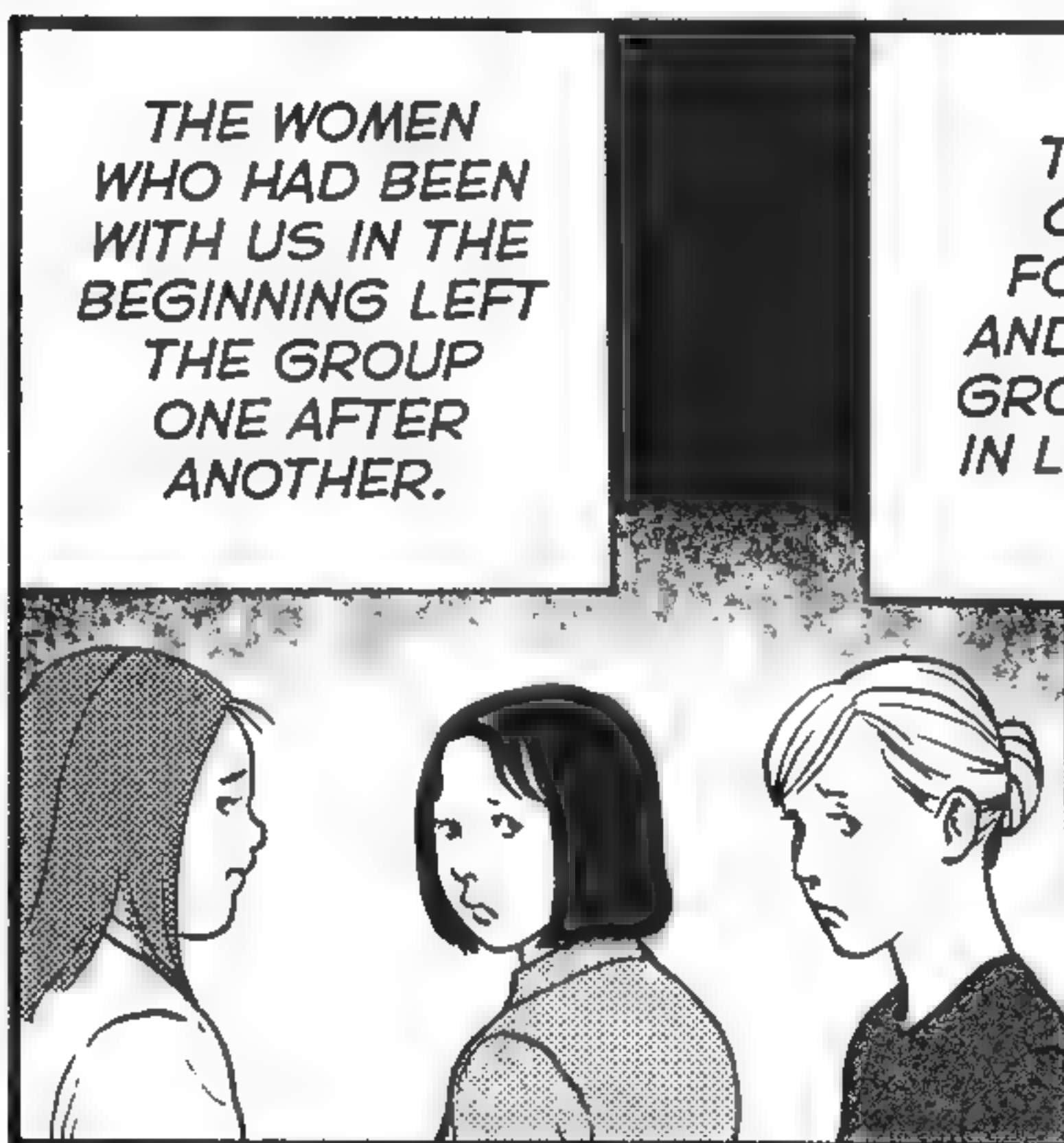
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, I WAS STILL ABLE TO SEE HER UP CLOSE BACK THEN.

OFTEN, MARIKO WOULD BE THE LEADER OF THE DISCUSSION, IN PLACE OF HER BUSY FATHER.

I'D LISTEN EAGERLY TO HER ENTHUSIASTIC TALK ABOUT UFOS...

...AND GET DRUNK ON THE DELICIOUS WINE SERVED AT THE SHONO HOUSE.

THE MEN WOULD BE EVEN FURTHER INTOXICATED BY MARIKO'S BEAUTY.

SEEING HER UP CLOSE... SURE!

SHE WAS REMINISCENT OF THE BEAUTIFUL VENUSIAN THAT THE FAMOUS UFOLIGIST GEORGE ADAMSKI MET.

...OR THE ELEGANT NAPE OF HER NECK THAT WE CAUGHT GLIMPSES OF WHEN SHE FIXED HER HAIR.

AND THE ANGELIC SMILE THAT WOULD SLIP PAST HER COOL EXTERIOR FROM TIME TO TIME...

THE WOMEN WHO HAD BEEN WITH US IN THE BEGINNING LEFT THE GROUP ONE AFTER ANOTHER.

THE RESEARCH SOCIETY CHANGED FROM A PURE FOCUS ON UFO RESEARCH AND CAME TO BE RULED BY A GROUP OF MEN DESPERATELY IN LOVE WITH MARIKO SHONO.

I THINK ALL THE MEN WERE IN LOVE WITH HER.

MARIKO ...

UFO RESEARCH IS MY REASON FOR LIVING!

MARIKO'S FATHER ALSO NOTICED THIS CHANGE AND WANTED TO DISBAND THE SOCIETY, BUT...

DADDY! I WILL NEVER STOP!

IT WAS AROUND THAT TIME THAT MARIKO STARTED TO DISAPPEAR FROM VIEW.

AND IT LOOKED LIKE THE OTHER MEN ALSO FELL PREY TO THE SAME SYMPTOMS AROUND THE SAME TIME.

ALL RIGHT, I'D LIKE TO GET STARTED.

BUT FIRST, LET ME INTRODUCE OUR NEWEST MEMBER.

THIS IS SANO.

HI, I'M SANO. I'M A TOTAL UFO FREAK. PLEASED TO MEET YOU!

IT'S A REAL SURPRISE HOW INCREDIBLY BEAUTIFUL CHAIRPERSON MARIKO IS, THOUGH.

HA HA HA HA

CLAP
CLAP
CLAP

I GUESS HE CAN SEE MARIKO...

NOW THEN. I'D LIKE TO START BY...

...REPORTING ON THE UFO I WITNESSED THE OTHER DAY!

MARIKO.

CAN I HAVE A SECOND?

YES, KURATA?

WHAT IS IT?

ALIEN ABDUCTION. SO YOU MEAN INCIDENTS WHERE ALIENS KIDNAP HUMAN BEINGS.

THERE IS? ALL RIGHT.

THERE'S SOMETHING THAT'S BEEN BOTHERING ME.

I KNOW WE USUALLY DISCUSS UFO SIGHTINGS, BUT CAN WE MAKE ALIEN ABDUCTIONS TONIGHT'S AGENDA?

THE TRUTH IS...

SO WHAT'S BOTHER-ING YOU, KURATA?

THOSE ABDUCTED TESTIFY THAT THEY WERE EXPERIMENTED AND OPERATED ON BY ALIENS...

WHAT ?!

THERE'S A PERIOD OF THE PAST... THAT I HAVE NO CLEAR MEMORIES OF.

...I MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABDUCTED BY ALIENS.

I TRIED TO REMEMBER THIS TIME AND...

...THE IMAGE OF A ROOM FILLED WITH DAZZLING LIGHT POPPED INTO MY HEAD.

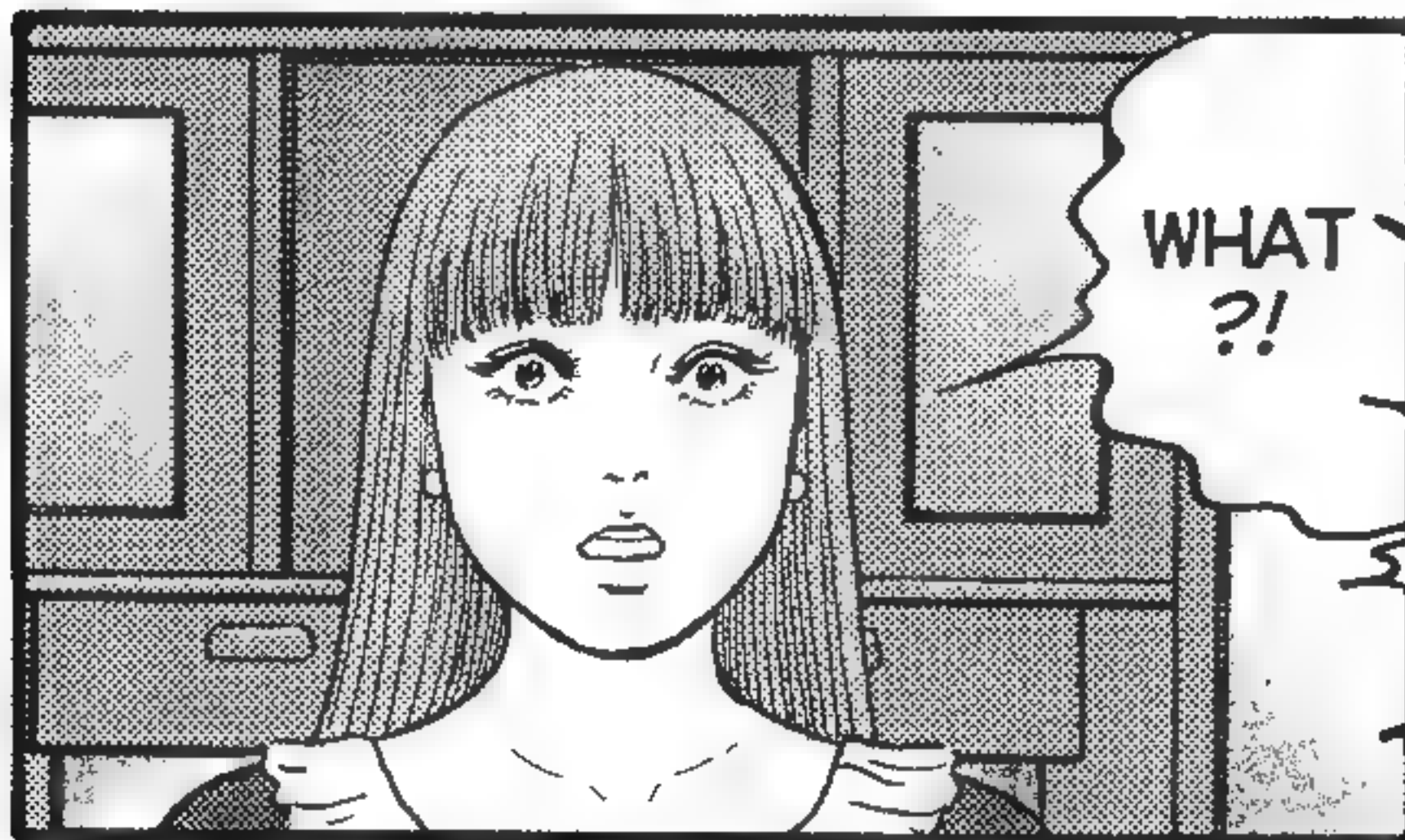
WITH WHITE SHADOW PEOPLE.

AND THEN I GOT A TERRIBLE HEADACHE, AND WHEN I WOKE UP, I WAS IN THE PARK.

AH!

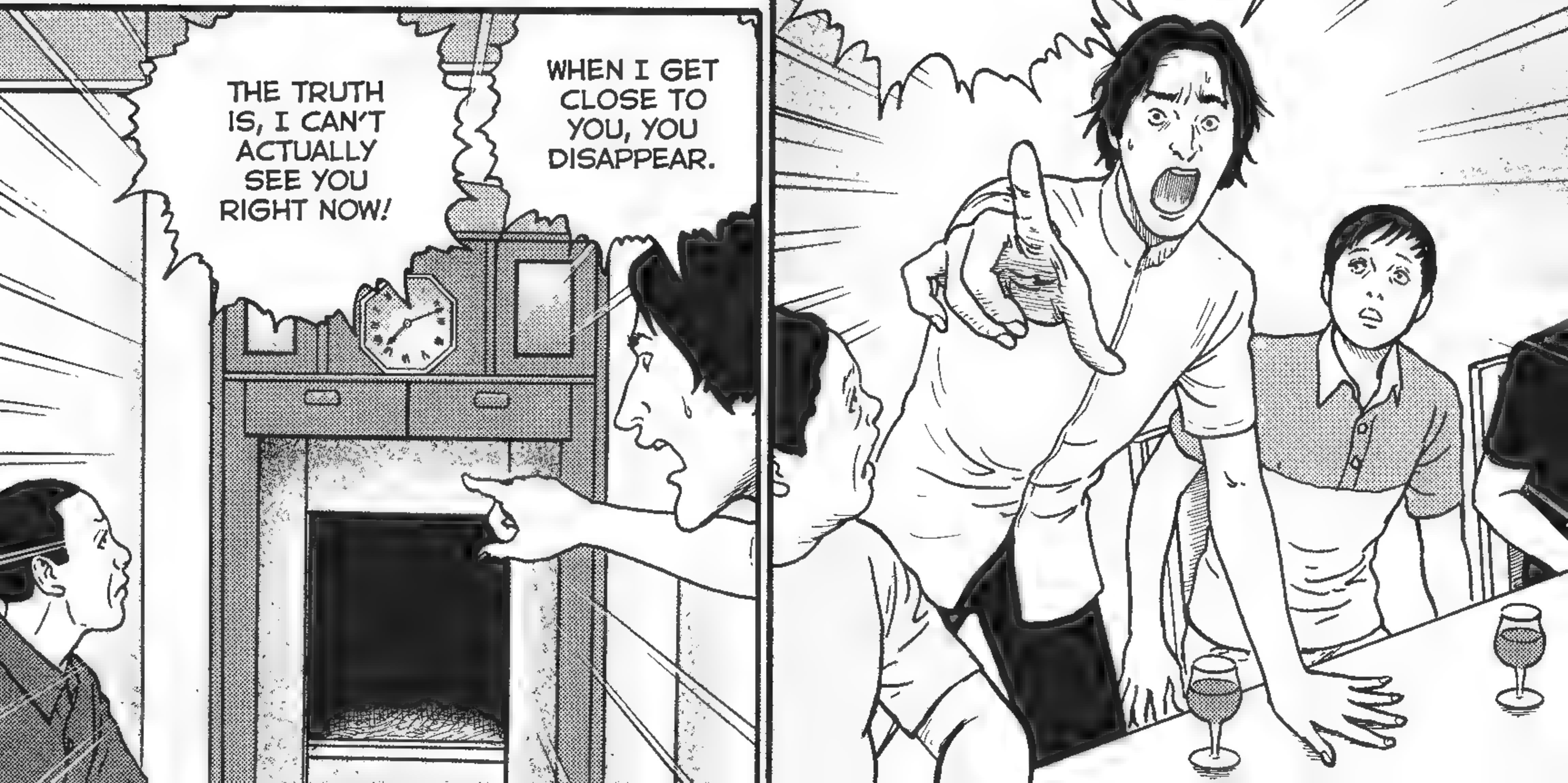
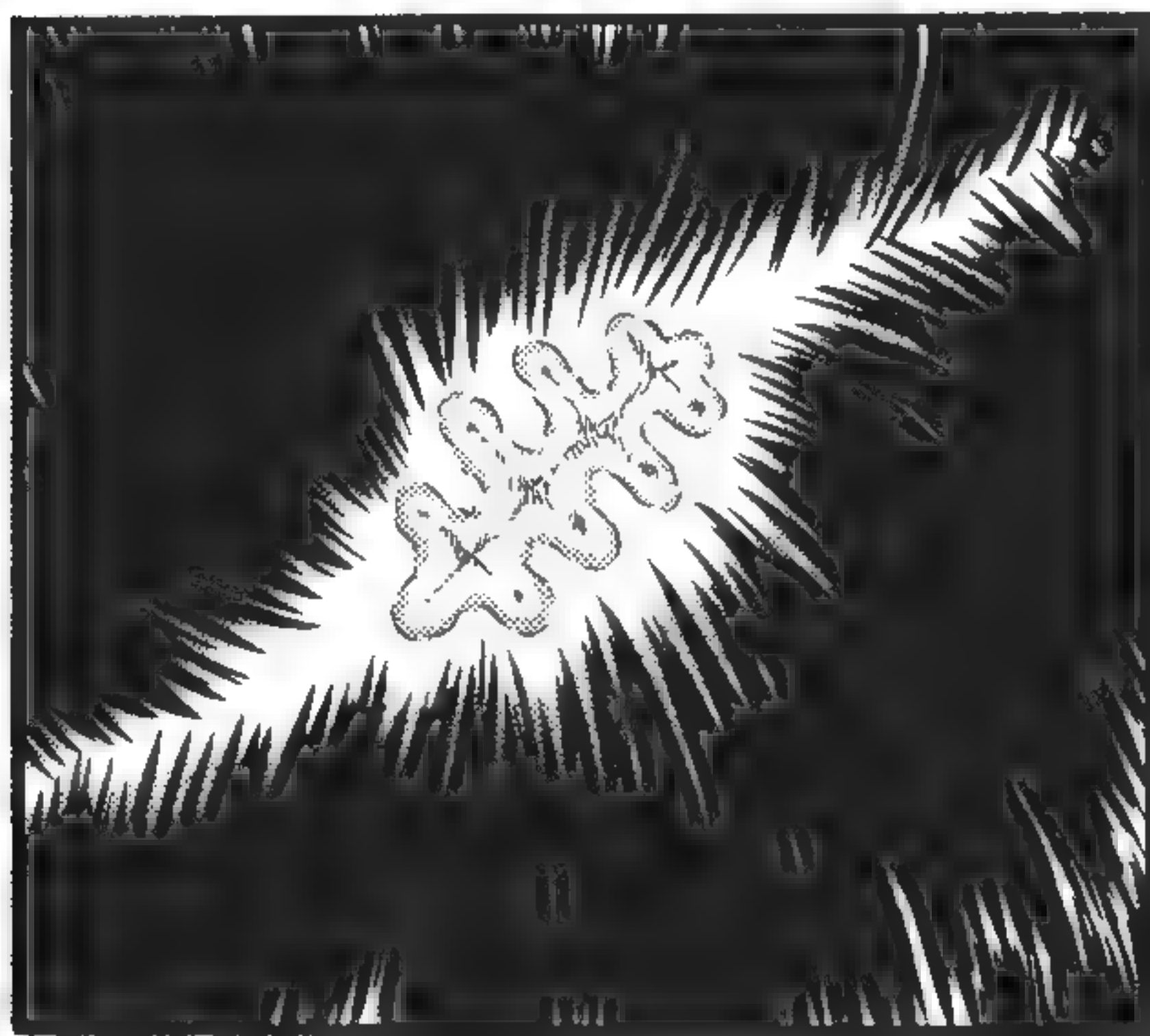
OF COURSE, I HAVE NO MEMORY OF GOING TO THE PARK.

AND THIS NEXT PART IS KEY.

EVER SINCE THAT TIME... MARIKO!

YOU'VE STARTED DISAP-PEARING!!

WHAT ?!

WHEN I GET CLOSE TO YOU, YOU DISAPPEAR.

THE TRUTH IS, I CAN'T ACTUALLY SEE YOU RIGHT NOW!

MARIKO, I HAVE TO TELL YOU!
I'M IN LOVE WITH YOU!
MY FEELINGS KEPT GETTING STRONGER, AND JUST WHEN I COULDN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE... I STOPPED BEING ABLE TO SEE YOU!
RIGHT AFTER MY MEMORY OF THE BRIGHT LIGHT!
I THINK THIS IS THE WORK OF ALIENS.
SO I WENT LOOKING FOR PROOF!
AND I FOUND THIS.
PLEASE TAKE A LOOK!
I FOUND A SMALL SCAR ON THE BACK OF MY HEAD.
!

I DO, TOO!

M-ME, TOO. I CAN'T SEE MARIKO, EITHER.

ME EITHER!

AH! I HAVE A SCAR, TOO?!

ME, TOO!

ALIENS EXPERIMENTED ON ME!

THIS IS PROOF OF AN ALIEN ABDUCTION.

BUT WHY?! WHY YOU OF ALL THINGS?!

THE RESULT OF THAT EXPERIMENT IS THAT I CAN'T SEE YOU ANYMORE.

AT LEAST HOLD MY HAND!

I-IT'S TOO MUCH. HELP ME, MARIKO... AT LEAST!

NO!!

AND YOU CAN'T SUDDENLY GO TELLING ME YOU LOVE ME!

W-WAIT. I DON'T UNDERSTAND AT ALL.

VENUS! MY PRECIOUS VENUS!

MARIKO! WHERE ARE YOU? WHERE?!

NO! *I'M* THE ONE WHO LOVES HER!

M-ME, TOO.

HNGH!

BAM

SHUT UP, IWATA!

DON'T GO LOSING YOUR REASON!

HEY! GUYS, STOP!

THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE A UFO LOVERS' MEETING, YOU KNOW?!

HEY! HAVE YOU ALL LOST YOUR MINDS?!

M-MARIKO, YOU'RE BEHIND THE NEW GUY, AREN'T YOU?!

THAT'S ENOUGH!!

YOU DISGUSTING WORMS!

DON'T YOU EVER COME NEAR MY DAUGHTER AGAIN!

ALL OF YOU, GET OUT OF HERE NOW!!

AS OF TODAY, THE NANZAN UFO RESEARCH SOCIETY IS DISBANDED!

!

UNH ...
SOB SOB...
SOB SOB...
UNH...

STOP CRYING ALREADY, MARIKO.
TONIGHT WAS A GOOD LESSON FOR YOU.
SOB SOB ...
SANO... WAS IT?
COME ON. HAVE ANOTHER GLASS.
THANK YOU.

I HONESTLY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON.
I JUST FIGURED I HAD TO PROTECT MARIKO.
YES, YOU DID A FINE JOB THERE.
NO, NO. I WON'T STOP THERE.
I'LL BE HER BODY-GUARD.
SNRR SNRR

...SH'RILLY IS...

BUT MARIKO REALLY IS A BEAUTY...

SORRY TO BOTHER YOU AT NIGHT AGAIN. COME OVER RIGHT AWAY.

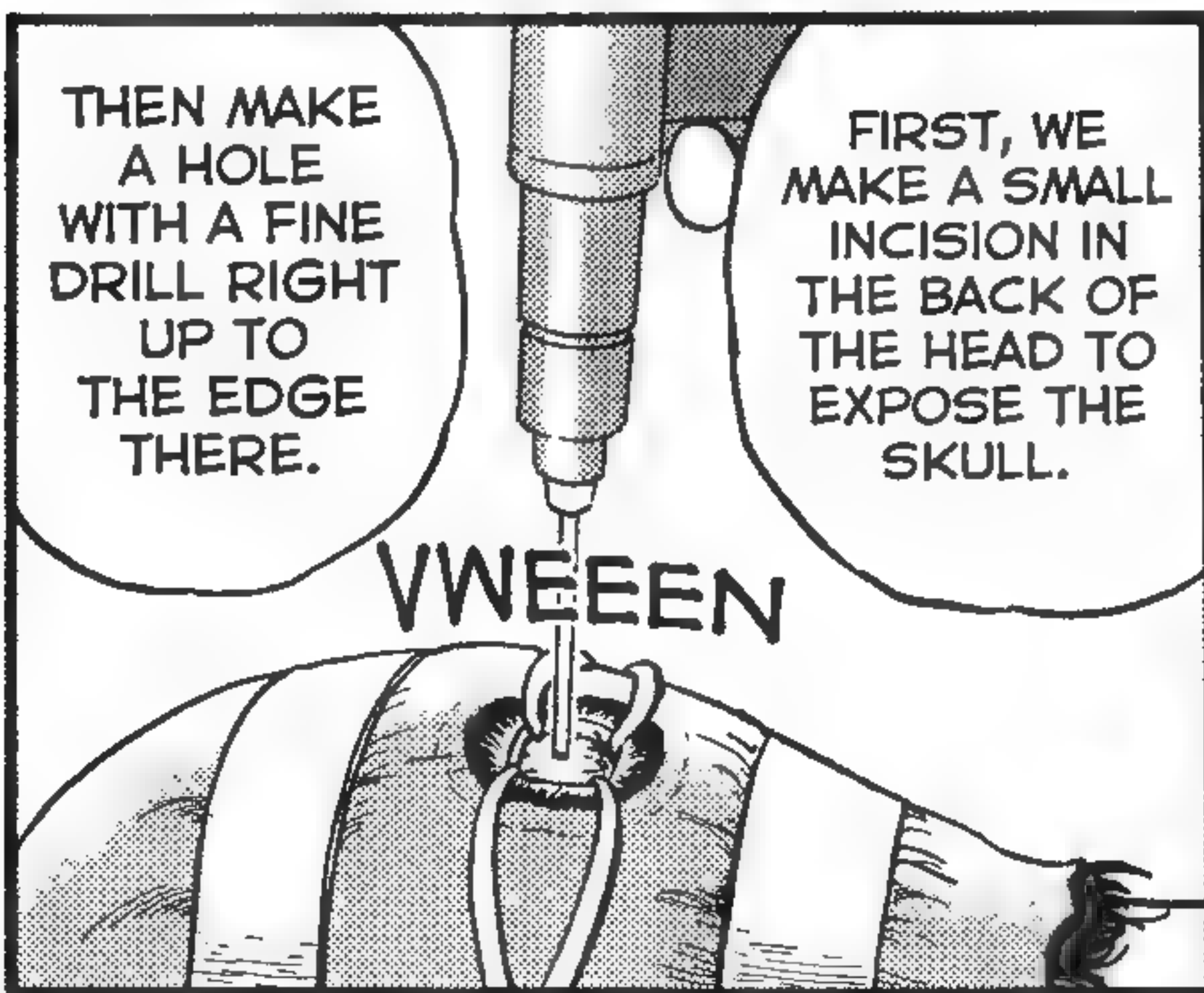
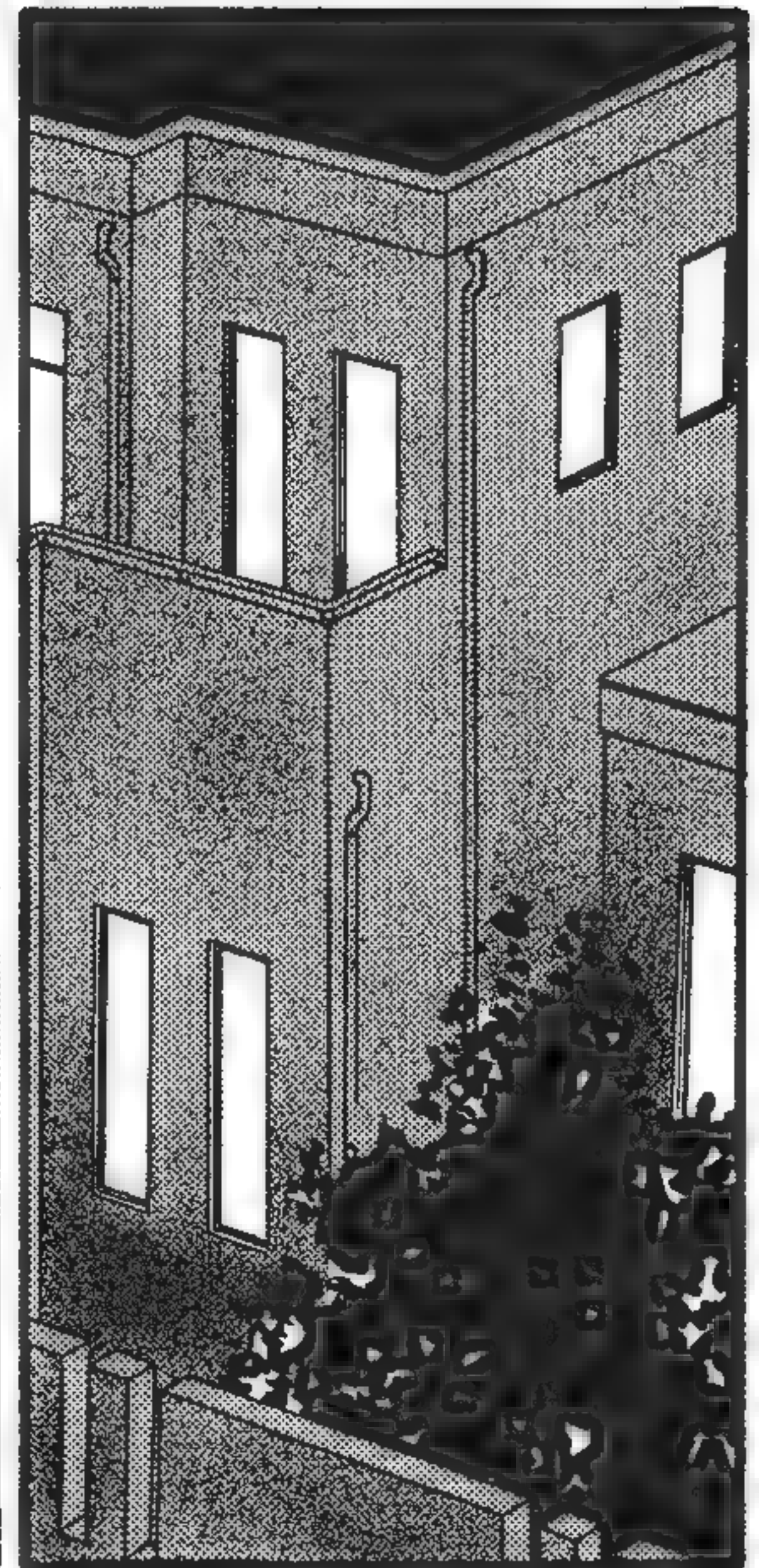
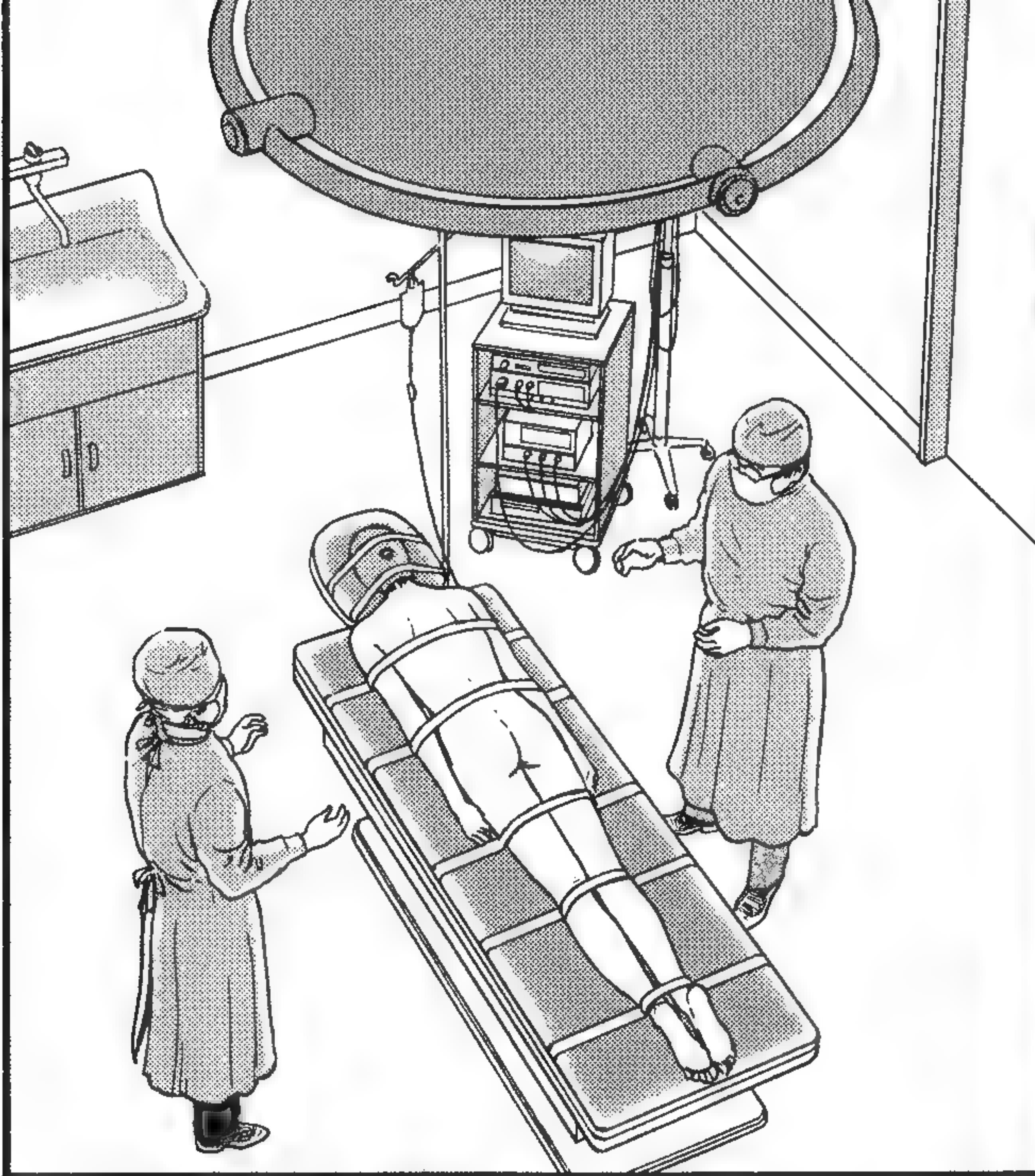
NISHI-MURA?

ZZZZ

ZZZ

NOW THEN, WE'LL BEGIN THE SURGERY.

HOW MANY DOES THIS MAKE, I WONDER.

FIRST, WE MAKE A SMALL INCISION IN THE BACK OF THE HEAD TO EXPOSE THE SKULL.

THEN MAKE A HOLE WITH A FINE DRILL RIGHT UP TO THE EDGE THERE.

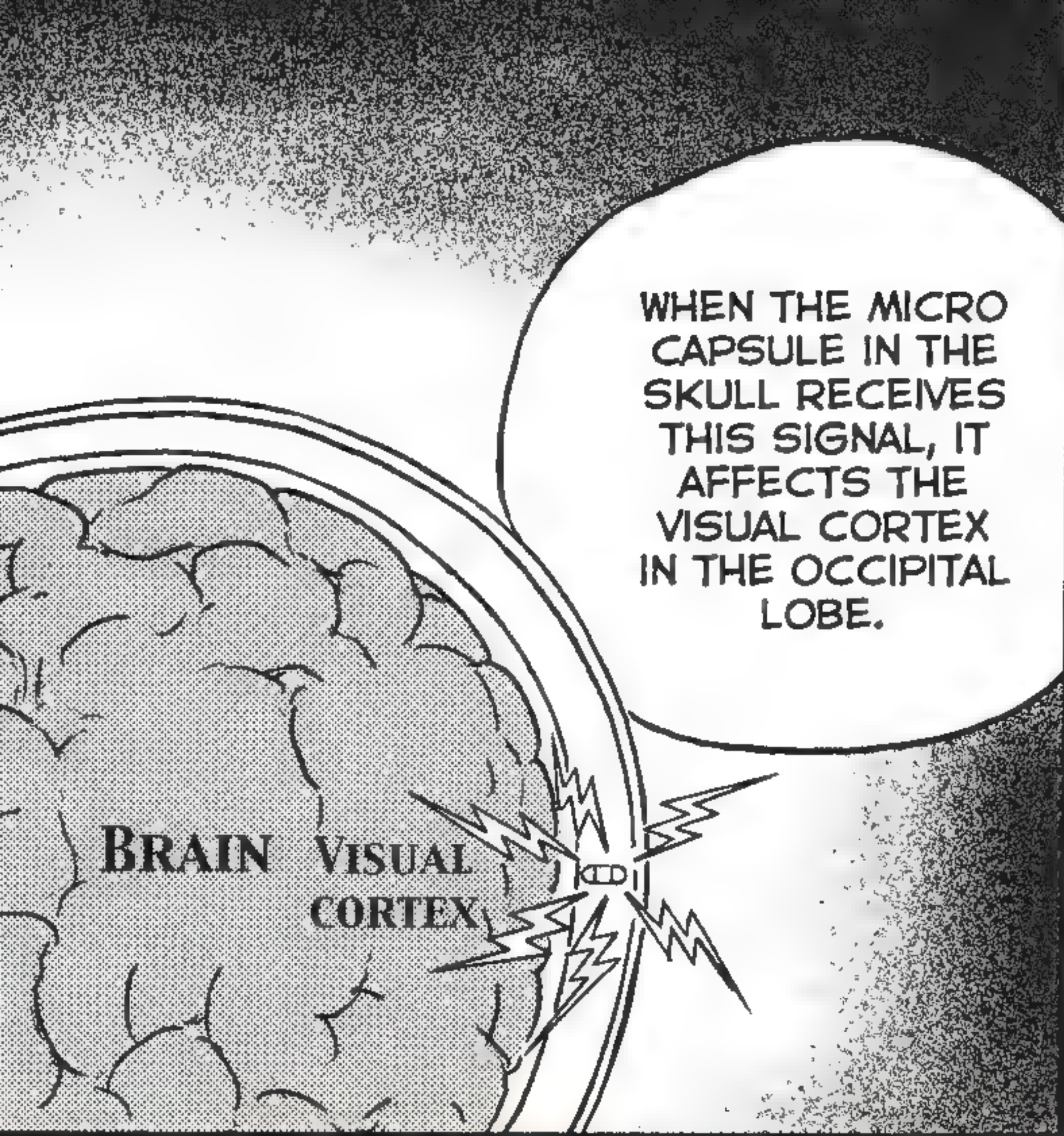
VWEEEN

WE INSERT A SPECIAL MICRO CAPSULE AND THEN FILL THE HOLE WITH ADHESIVE.

FINALLY, WE STICH THE SKIN BACK TOGETHER AND WE'RE DONE.

WE MUST FINISH THE OPERATION QUICKLY TO MINIMIZE THE PHYSICAL TRAUMA.

MEANWHILE, IN THOSE EARRINGS THAT MARIKO NEVER FAILS TO WEAR, A KEEPSAKE FROM MY WIFE...

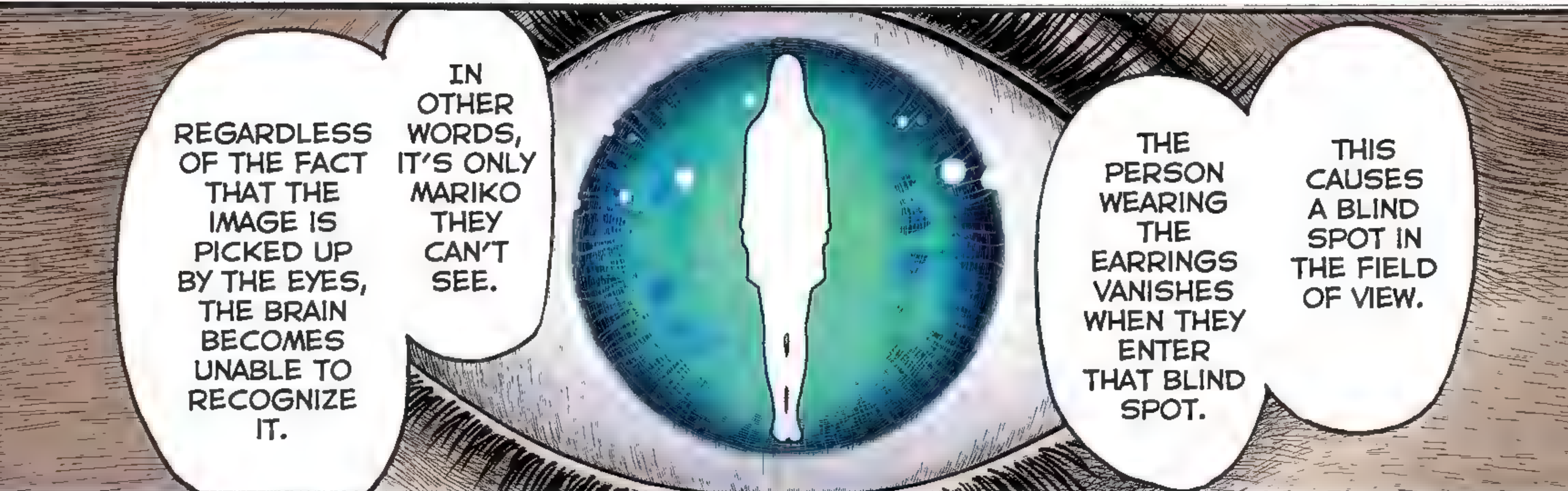
...WE PUT A DEVICE THAT EMITS A PARTICULAR SIGNAL.

WHEN THE MICRO CAPSULE IN THE SKULL RECEIVES THIS SIGNAL, IT AFFECTS THE VISUAL CORTEX IN THE OCCIPITAL LOBE.

BRAIN

VISUAL CORTEX

THIS CAUSES A BLIND SPOT IN THE FIELD OF VIEW.

THE PERSON WEARING THE EARRINGS VANISHES WHEN THEY ENTER THAT BLIND SPOT.

IN OTHER WORDS, IT'S ONLY MARIKO THEY CAN'T SEE.

REGARDLESS OF THE FACT THAT THE IMAGE IS PICKED UP BY THE EYES, THE BRAIN BECOMES UNABLE TO RECOGNIZE IT.

I DEVELOPED THIS TECHNIQUE FROM MY HOBBY OF STUDYING UFOS.

I DON'T BELIEVE UFOS ACTUALLY EXIST, BUT RATHER THAT THEY ARE A PRODUCT OF THE HUMAN BRAIN.

NOW, ONCE THE OPERATION IS OVER, WE ERASE THEIR MEMORIES OF THE LAST FEW DAYS WITH A SPECIAL DRUG AND AN ELECTRIC SHOCK, AND IT'S DONE.

BUT DOCTOR, THAT METHOD OF WIPING MEMORIES IS A FAIRLY DIFFICULT TECHNIQUE.

TRUE. IT'D BE QUITE AWFUL IF I FAILED TO ERASE THE MEMORIES.

BUT I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE RISK IF IT'S FOR THE SAKE OF MY BELOVED DAUGHTER.

I'LL KEEP SQUASHING THESE REPULSIVE WORMS WHENEVER THEY LATCH ON TO *MY* MARIKO! AND YOU'LL CONTINUE TO HELP ME, YES, NISHIMURA?

OF COURSE.

IF IT'S FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR DAUGHTER.

THANK YOU. I'M GOING TO ENHANCE THE STRENGTH OF THE SIGNAL FROM HER EARRINGS...

...AND MAKE IT SO THEY CAN'T SEE HER AT ALL, NOT EVEN FROM FAR AWAY!!

HEH HEH HEH... MWAH HA HA!!

HELP MEEEEE !!

NANZAN HOSPITAL

EEEEAAH!

AAAAAH!

H-HURRY! CHECK MY BRAIN!

ALIENS! ALIENS OPERATED ON MY BRAIN!

DOCTOR, THE MAN TAKEN INTO CARE IN THE PARK IS DERANGED.

R-RIGHT. JUST BEFORE I WAS ABDUCTED BY ALIENS, I WAS DRINKING WITH MARIKO'S DAD.

AND THEN I SUDDENLY GOT SLEEPY...

AFTER THAT, I WAS IN AN OPERATING ROOM. ASK HER DAD WHAT HAPPENED!

...AND I GOT A BAD FEELING, SO I RAN OVER TO THE SHONO HOUSE.

I HEARD THAT MARIKO'S FATHER, DR. ASAO SHONO, WAS BEING QUESTIONED BY THE POLICE THAT DAY...

THE GATE'S OPEN!

HAAH

HAAH

KSH KSH

AH?!

THE HOUSE-KEEPER!

NNGH ...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

STAY BACK, IWATA!

WE CAUGHT MARIKO! SHE'S OURS!

THIS WOMAN'S NOT HUMAN... SHE'S AN ALIEN! SHE'S A VENUSIAN WHO CAN MAKE HERSELF DISAPPEAR TO CONFUSE US!

UNH!

WHAM

YOU'VE GOT TO SNAP OUT OF IT!

STOP!

THUD

HER BEAUTY WAS TOO MUCH, TURNING THE LOVE AND ANIMAL PASSION TO VIOLENCE IN THE MEN WHO HAD LOST THEIR IDOL.

THAT EVENING, MARIKO'S BARELY RECOGNIZABLE BODY WAS FOUND IN A CORNER OF THE SHONO GARDEN.

AAAAH!

AAAAH!

MARIKO!

MARIKOOOOOO! FORGIVE MEEEE!

LATER, CAPSULES WERE REMOVED FROM THE SKULLS...

...OF ALL THE SOCIETY MEMBERS, INCLUDING THOSE ARRESTED FOR THE MURDER.

BUT THIS MEANT NOTHING ANYMORE.

MARIKO WAS GONE.

AND THEN A LITTLE WHILE AFTER THAT...

...I ALONE EXPERI-ENCED SOMETHING STRANGE.

FROM TIME TO TIME, IT WOULD APPEAR LIKE A KALEIDOSCOPE, FILLING MY FIELD OF VIEW.

THEY APPEAR NOW AS AFTER-IMAGES.

EVEN THOUGH MY BRAIN HADN'T BEEN ABLE TO RECOGNIZE THEM, CLOSE-UPS OF MARIKO WERE BURNED INTO MY RETINAS.

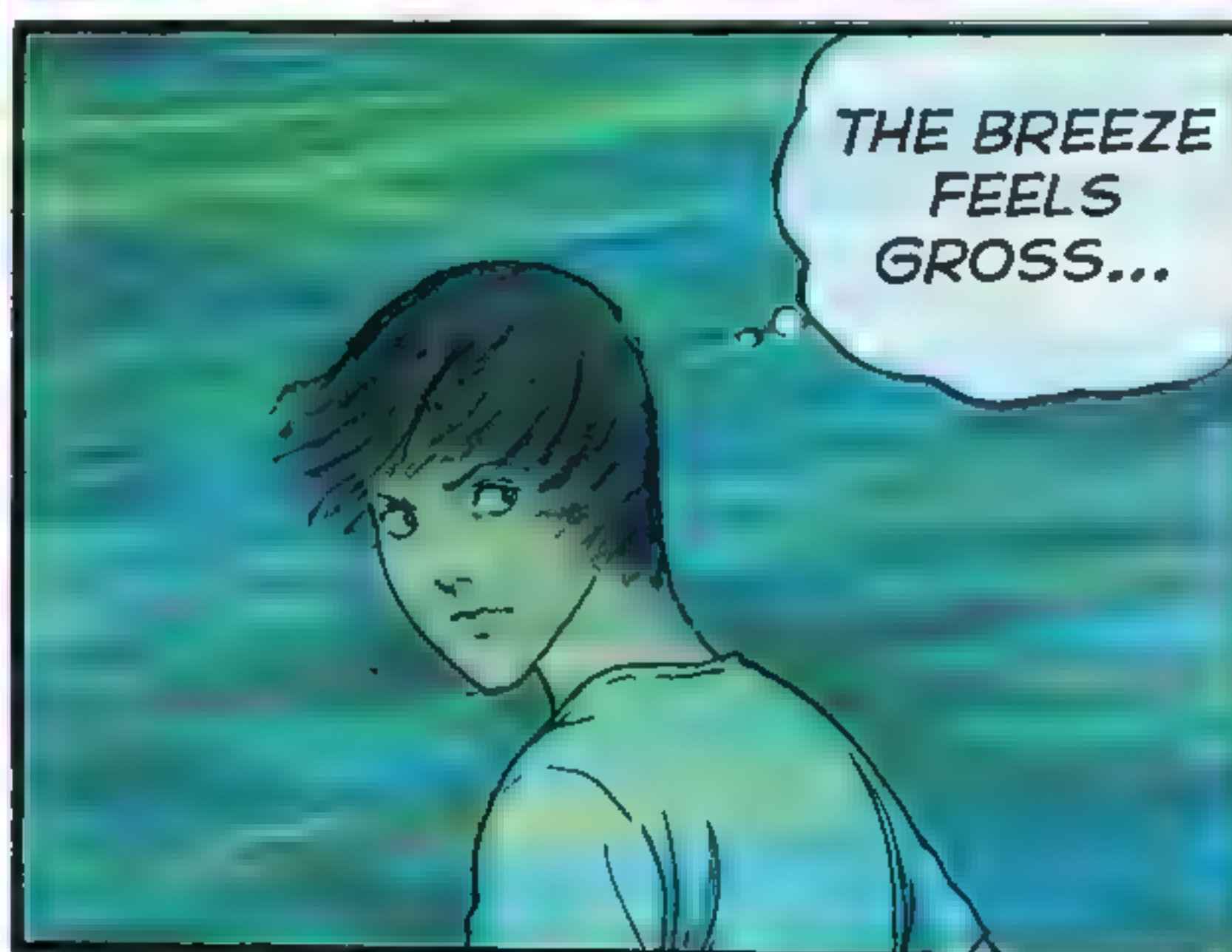
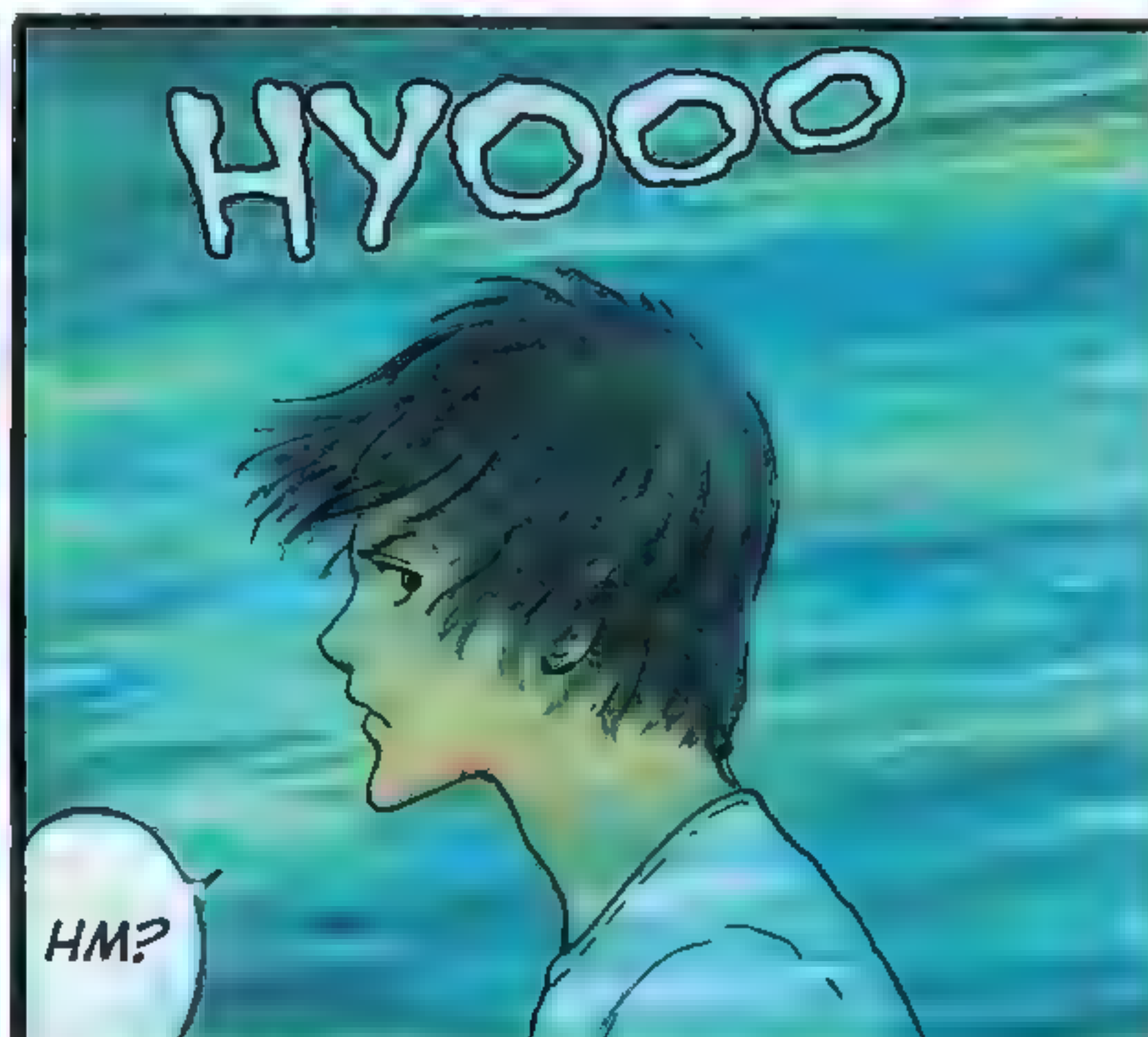
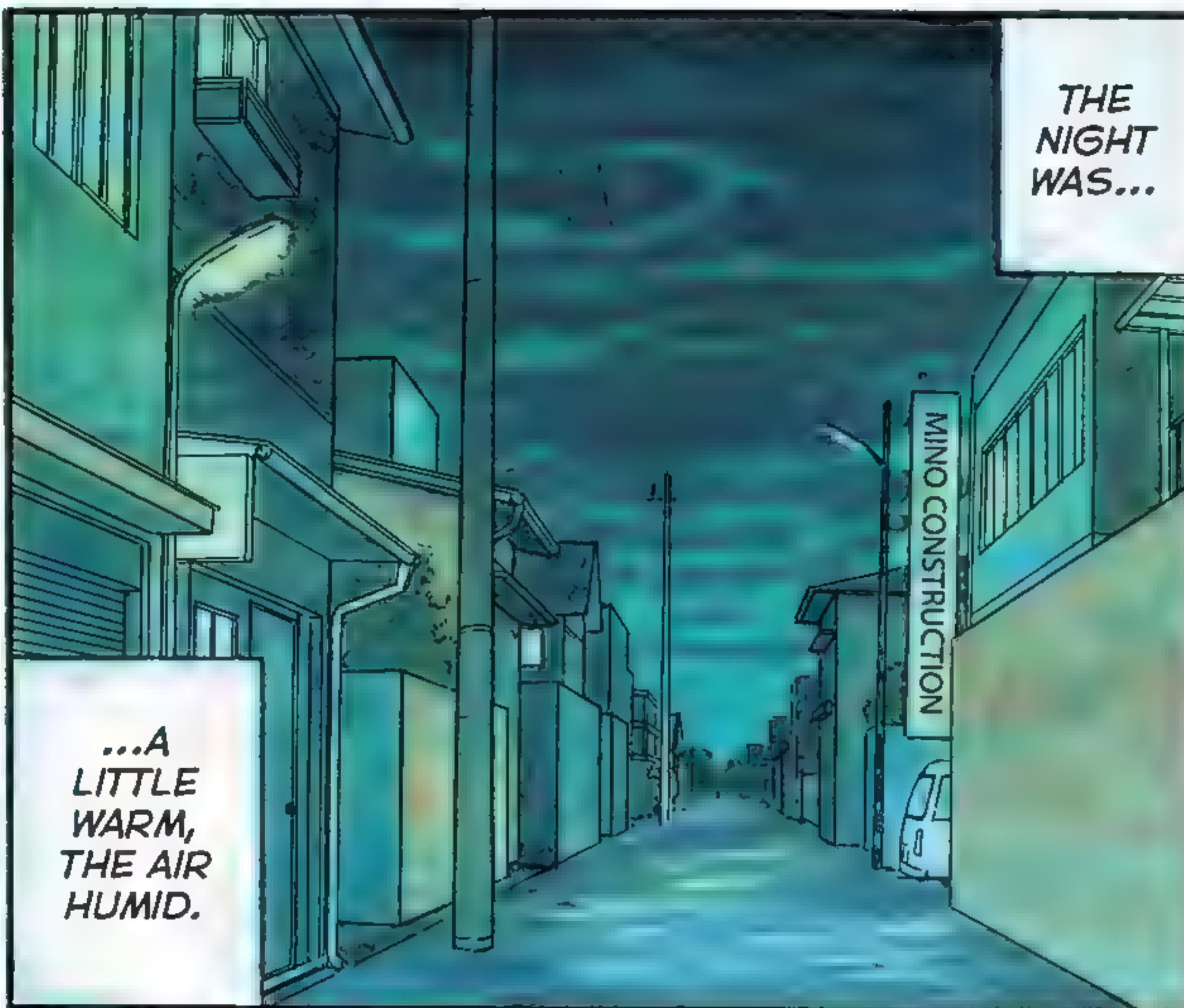
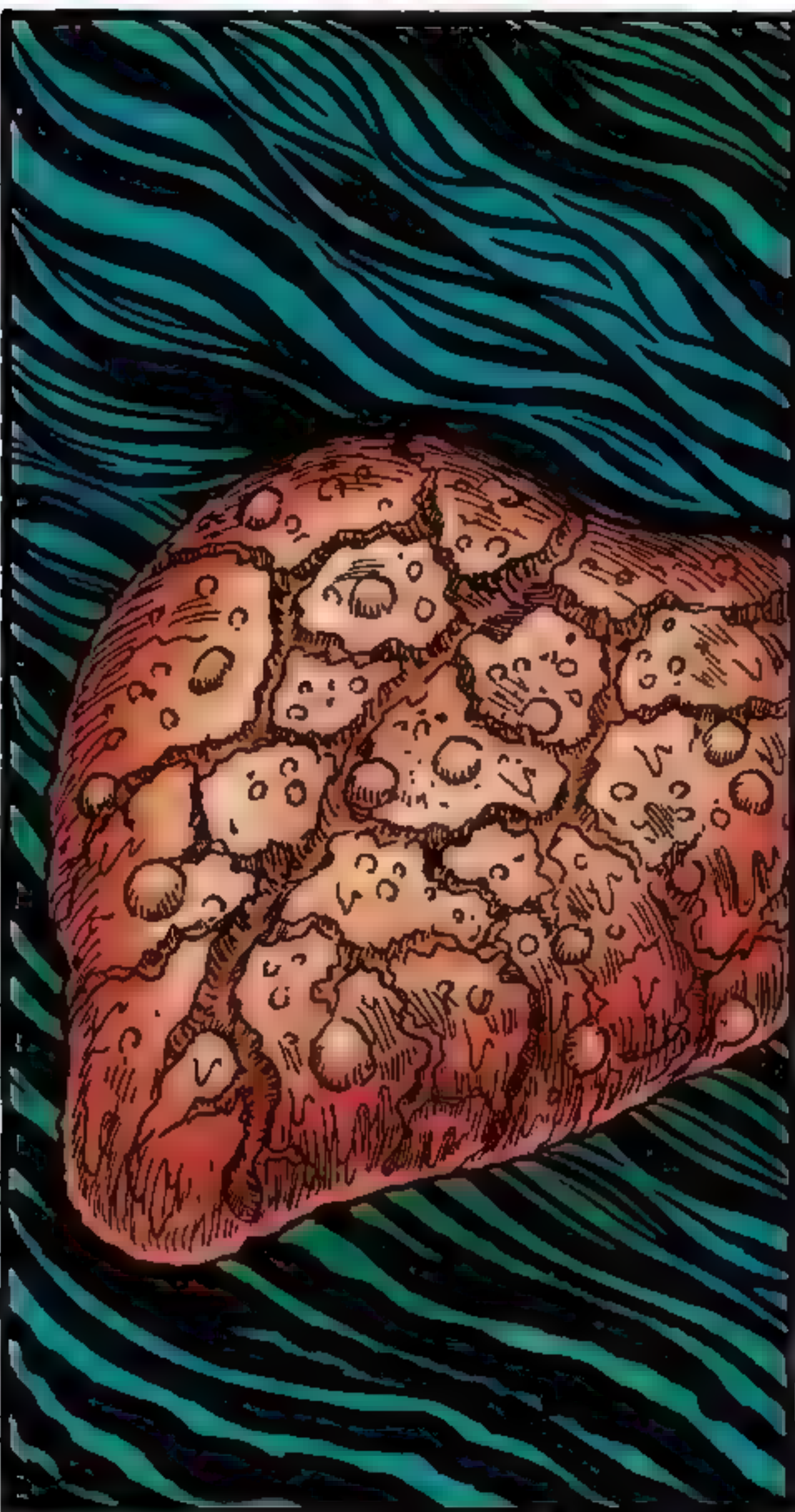
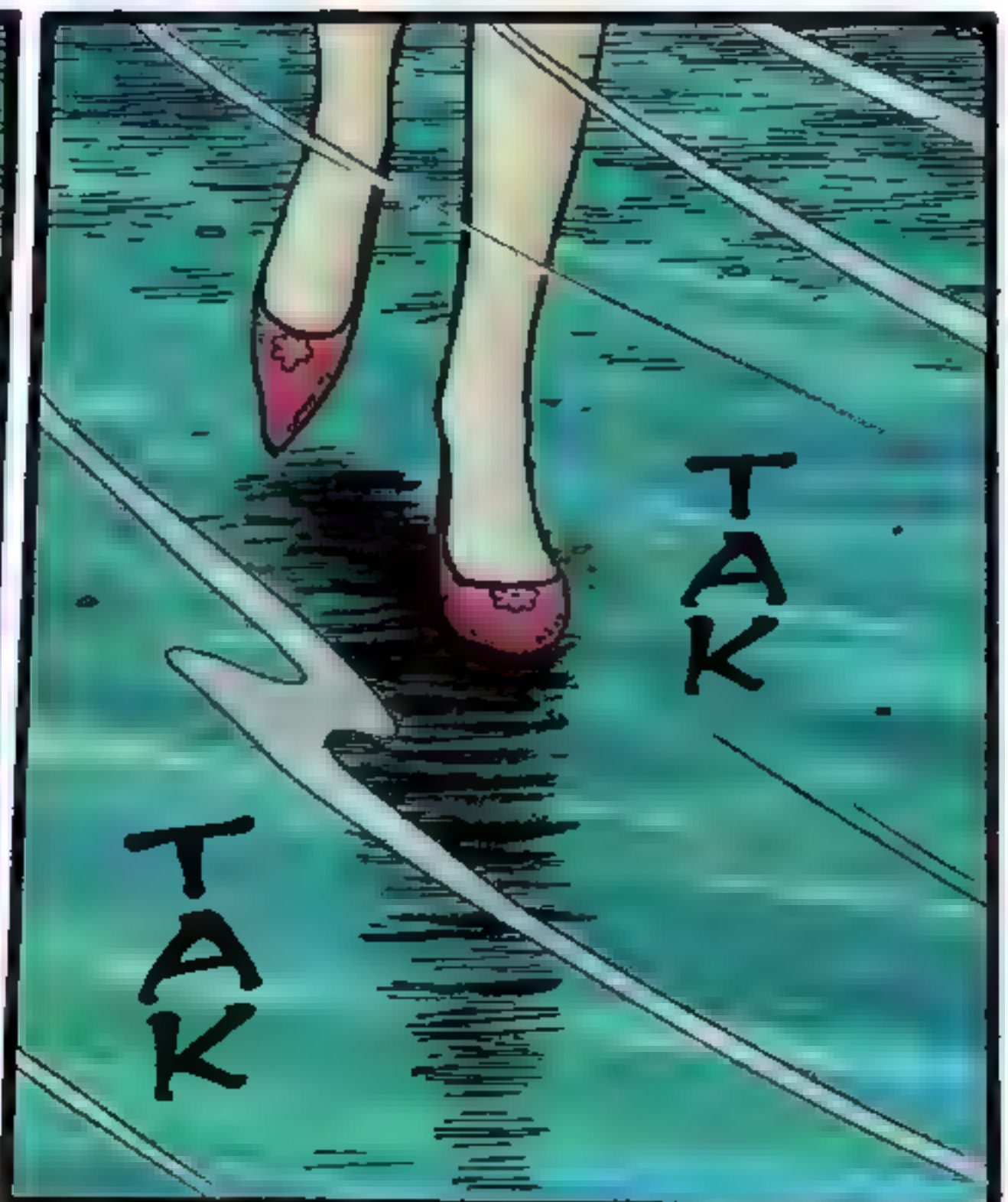
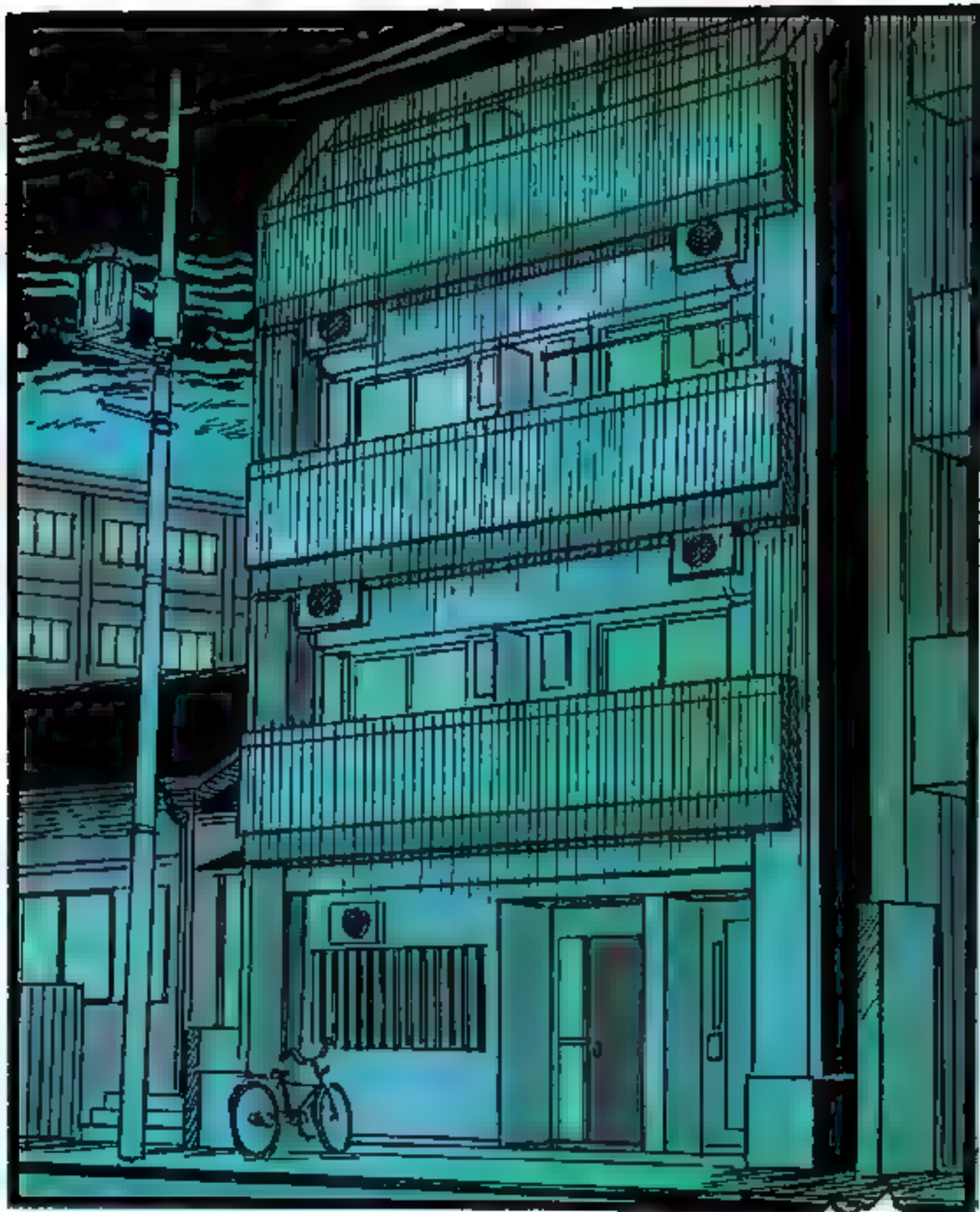
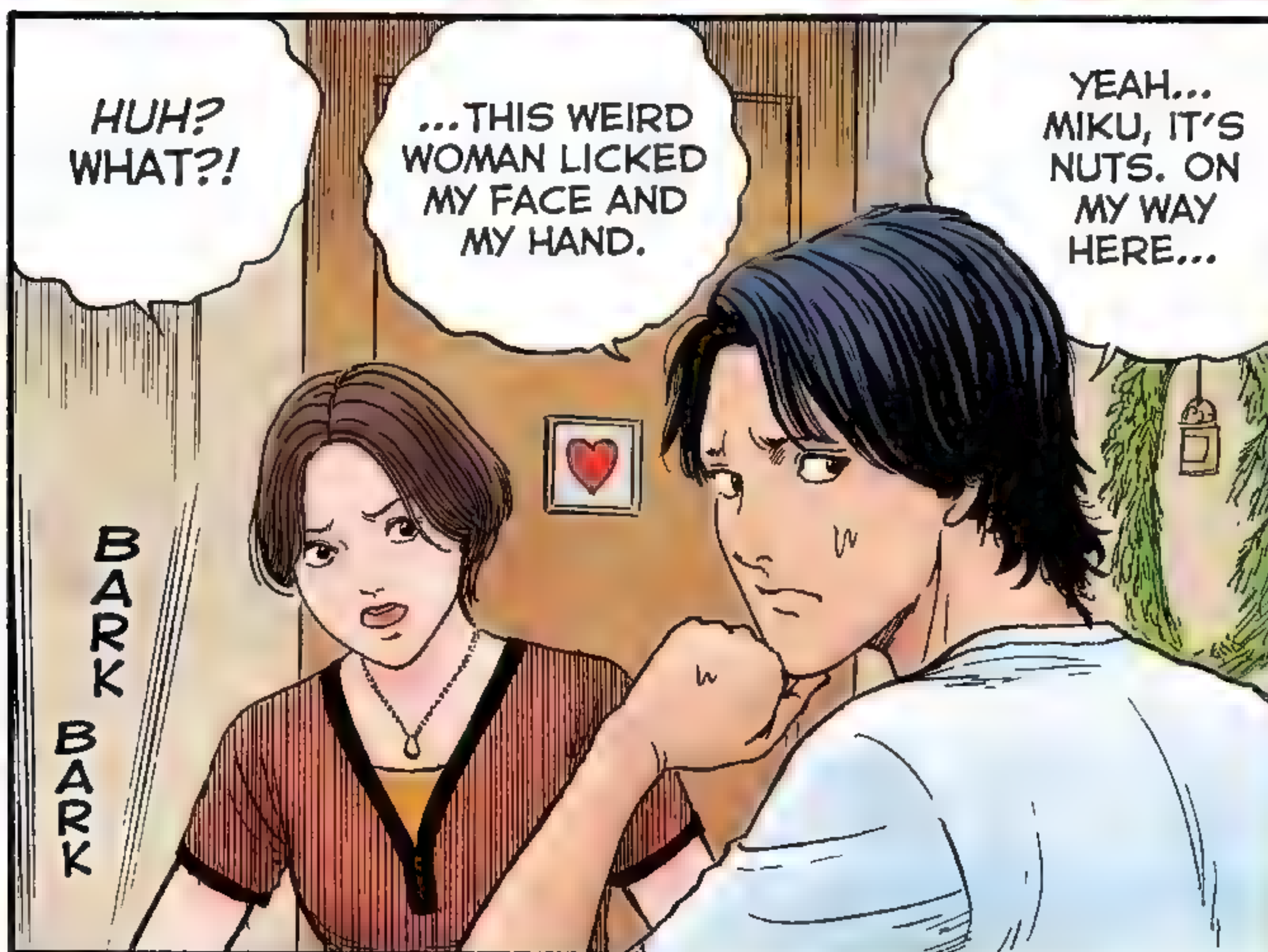
THE LICKING WOMAN

THE NIGHT WAS...
MINO CONSTRUCTION
...A LITTLE WARM, THE AIR HUMID.
HYOOO
HYOOO
HM?
THE BREEZE FEELS GROSS...
...

HYOO

TAK

TAK

AAAH?!

DING DONG
THAT HAS TO BE TSUYOSHI, PYON!
DING DONG
PANT PANT PANT
OKAY! I'M COOOOM-ING!
COME ON IN.

TSUYOSHI, WHAT'S WRONG? YOU'RE REALLY PALE.
YEAH... MIKU, IT'S NUTS. ON MY WAY HERE...
...THIS WEIRD WOMAN LICKED MY FACE AND MY HAND.
HUH? WHAT?!
BARK BARK

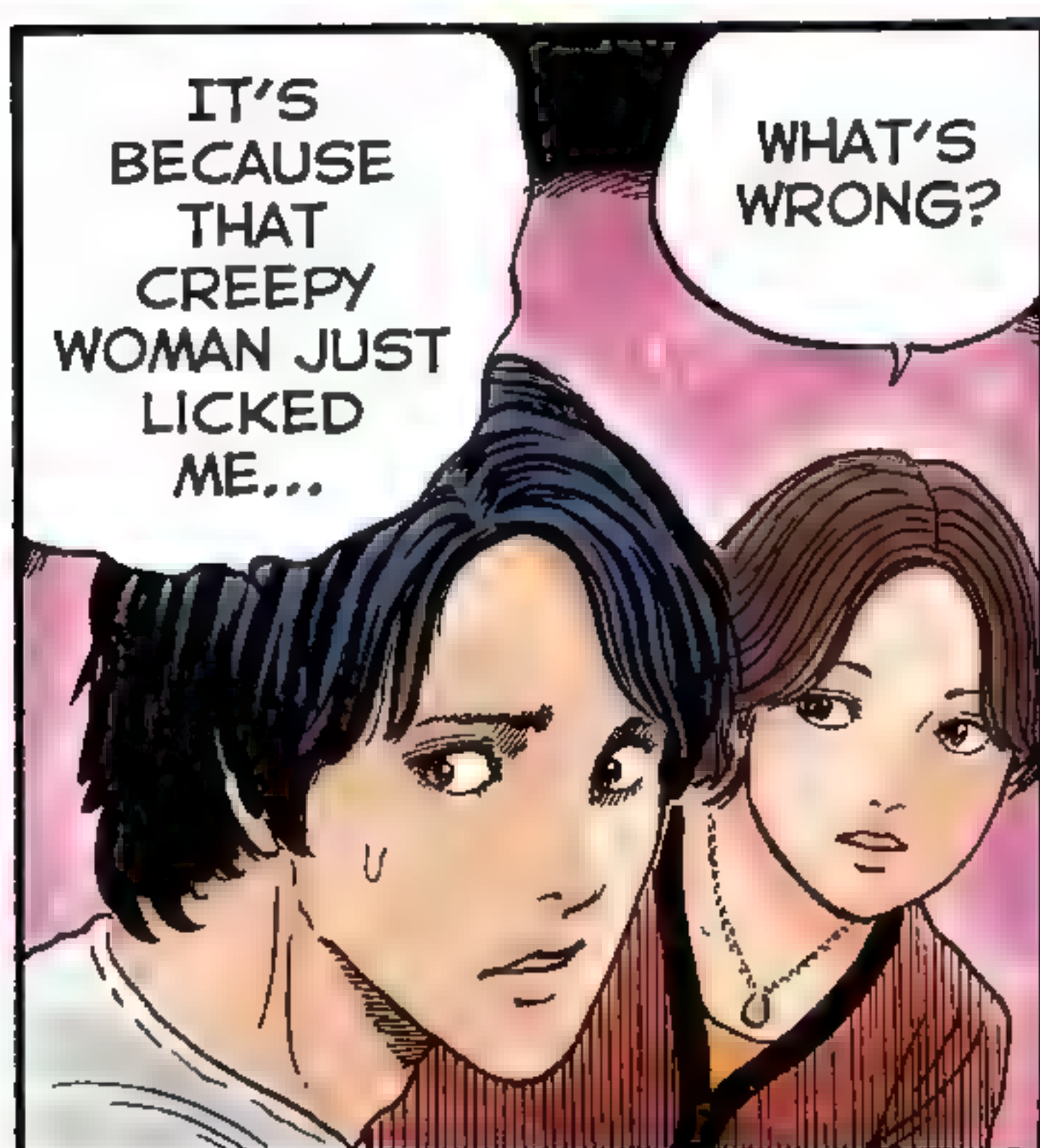
HEY, PYON. HOW ARE YOU?

BARK

BARK

YEAH. WELL, WHATEVER. IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL...

WE HAVE TO REPORT THIS TO THE POLICE!

GROSS. THAT'S SO CREEPY. WHAT A WEIRDO.

IT'S BECAUSE THAT CREEPY WOMAN JUST LICKED ME...

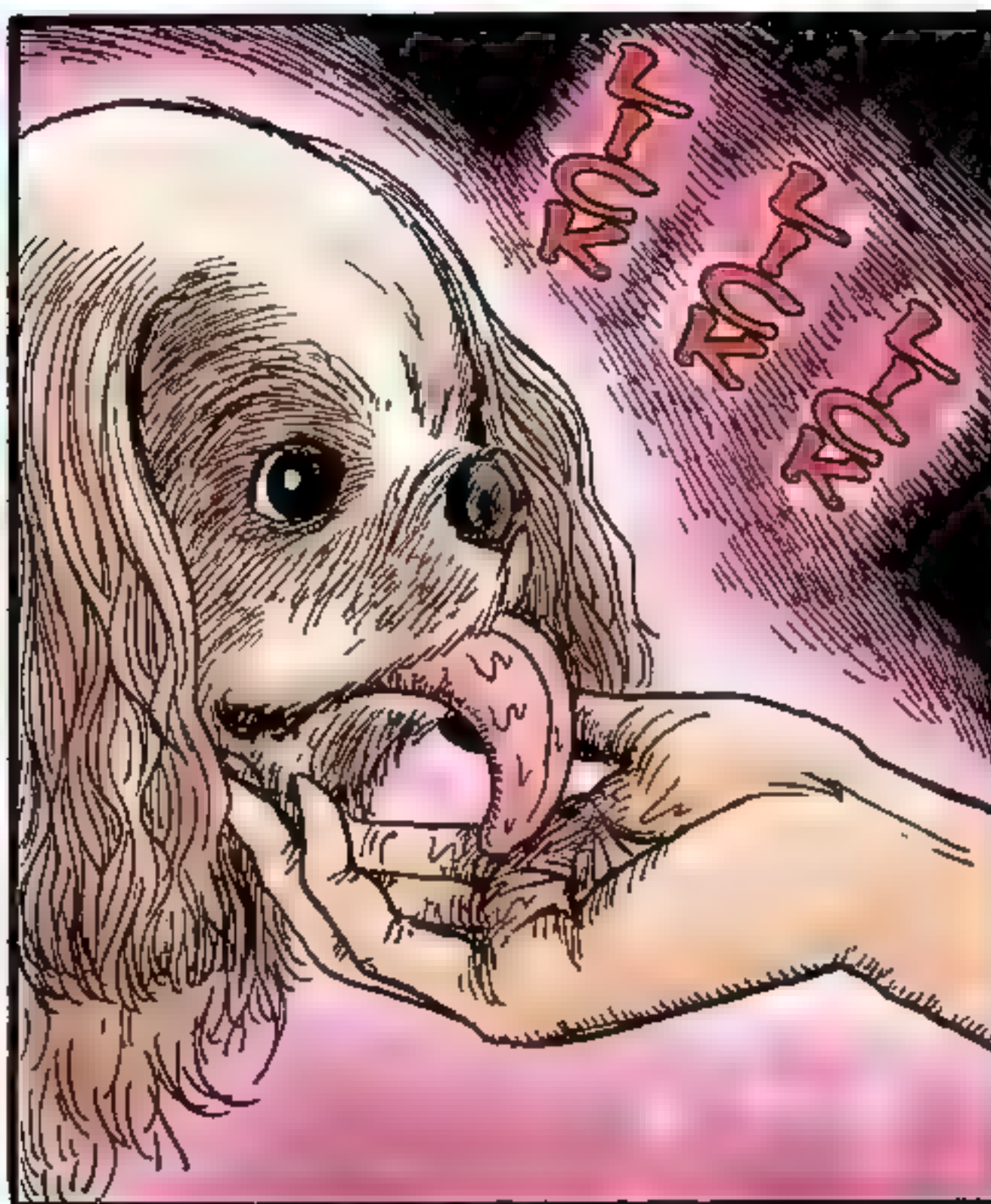
WHAT'S WRONG?

AH!

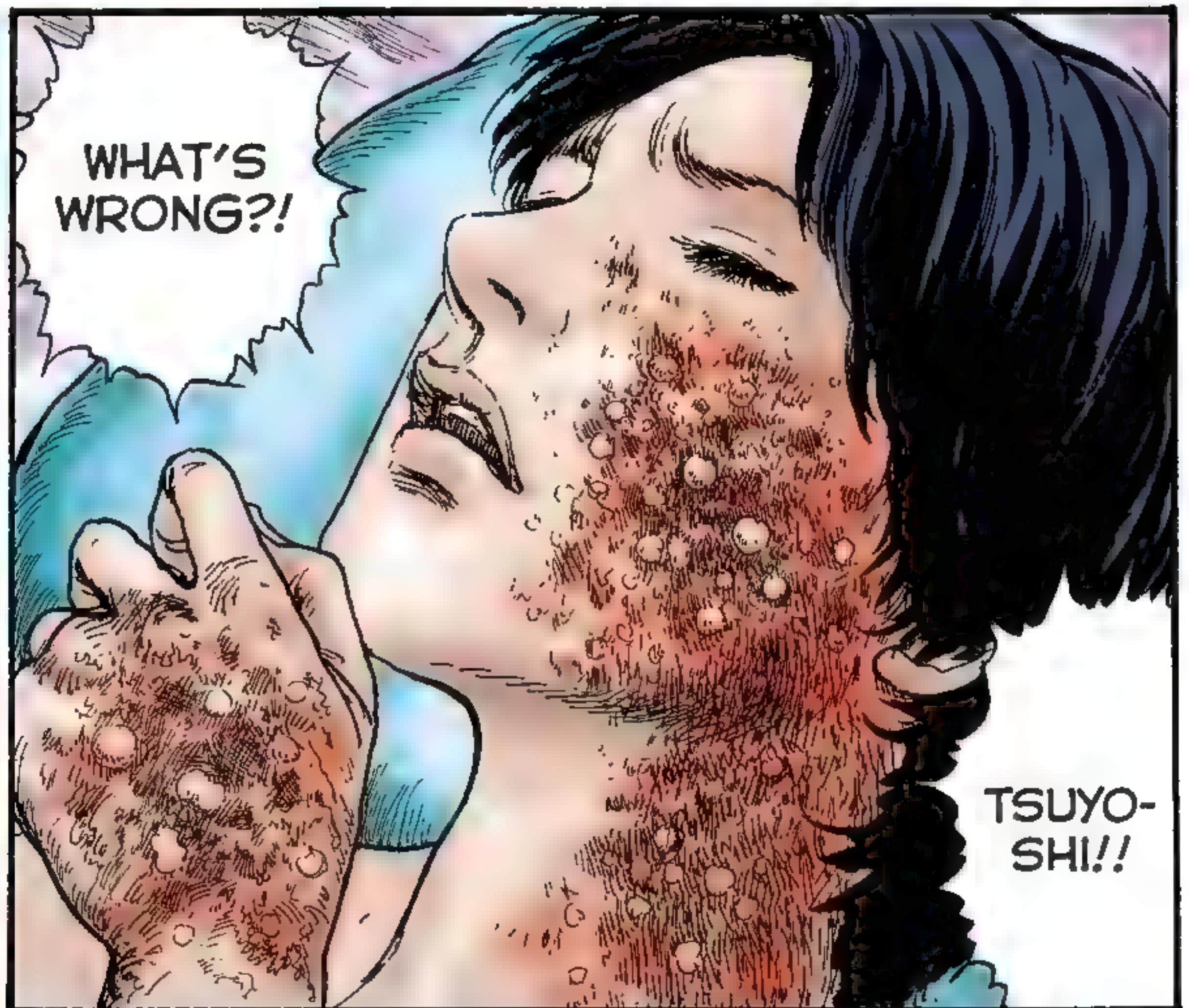
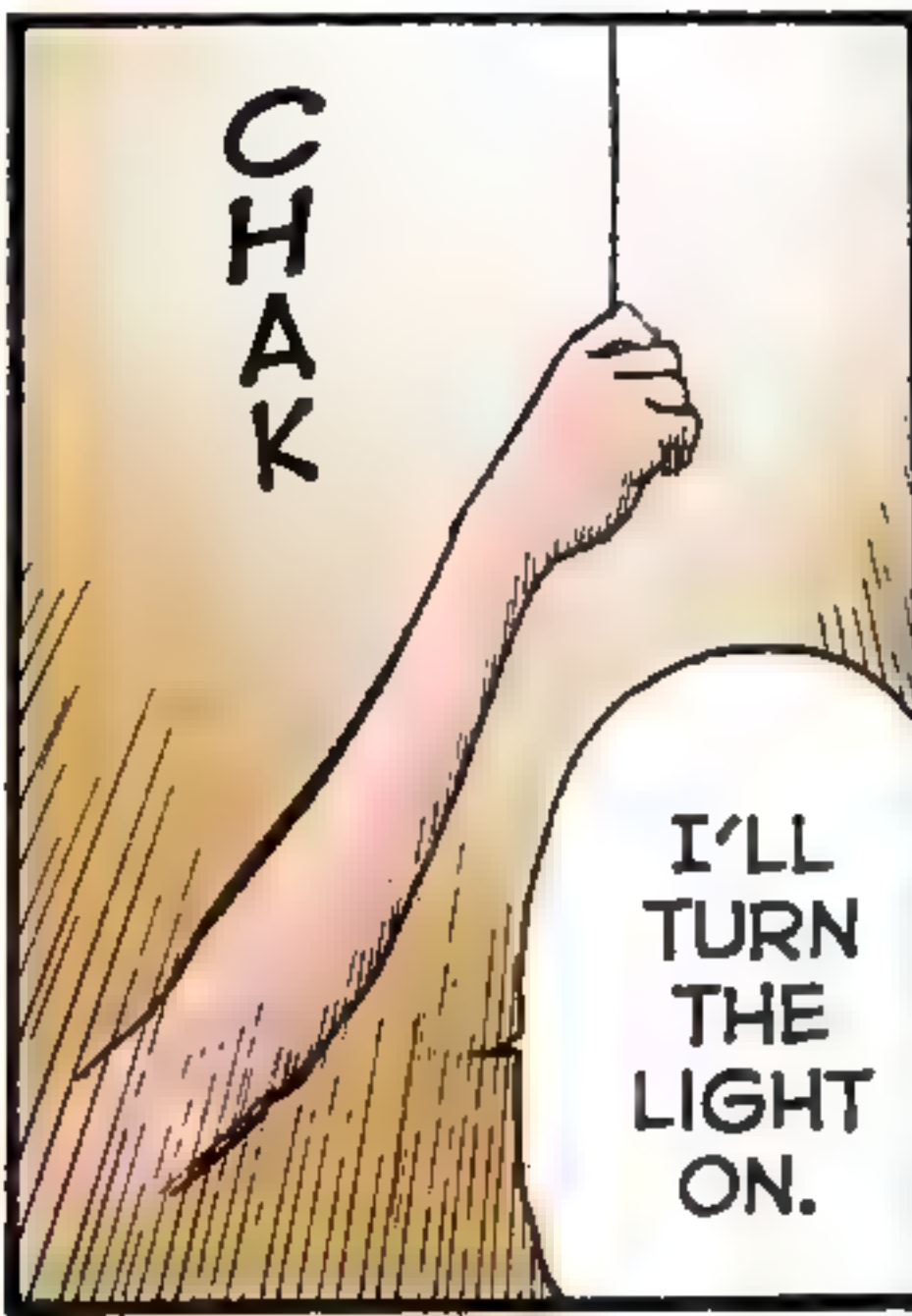
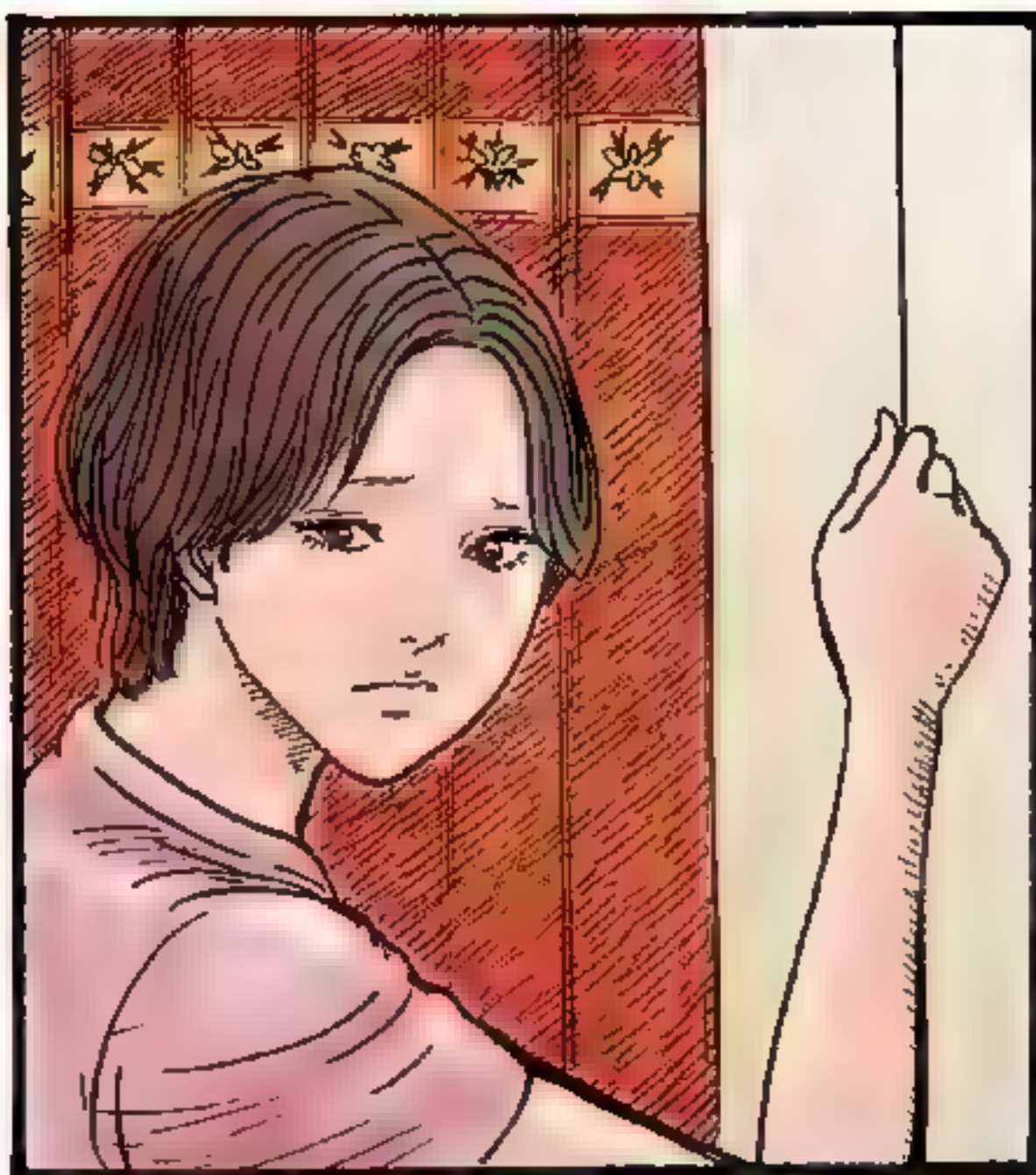
LICK

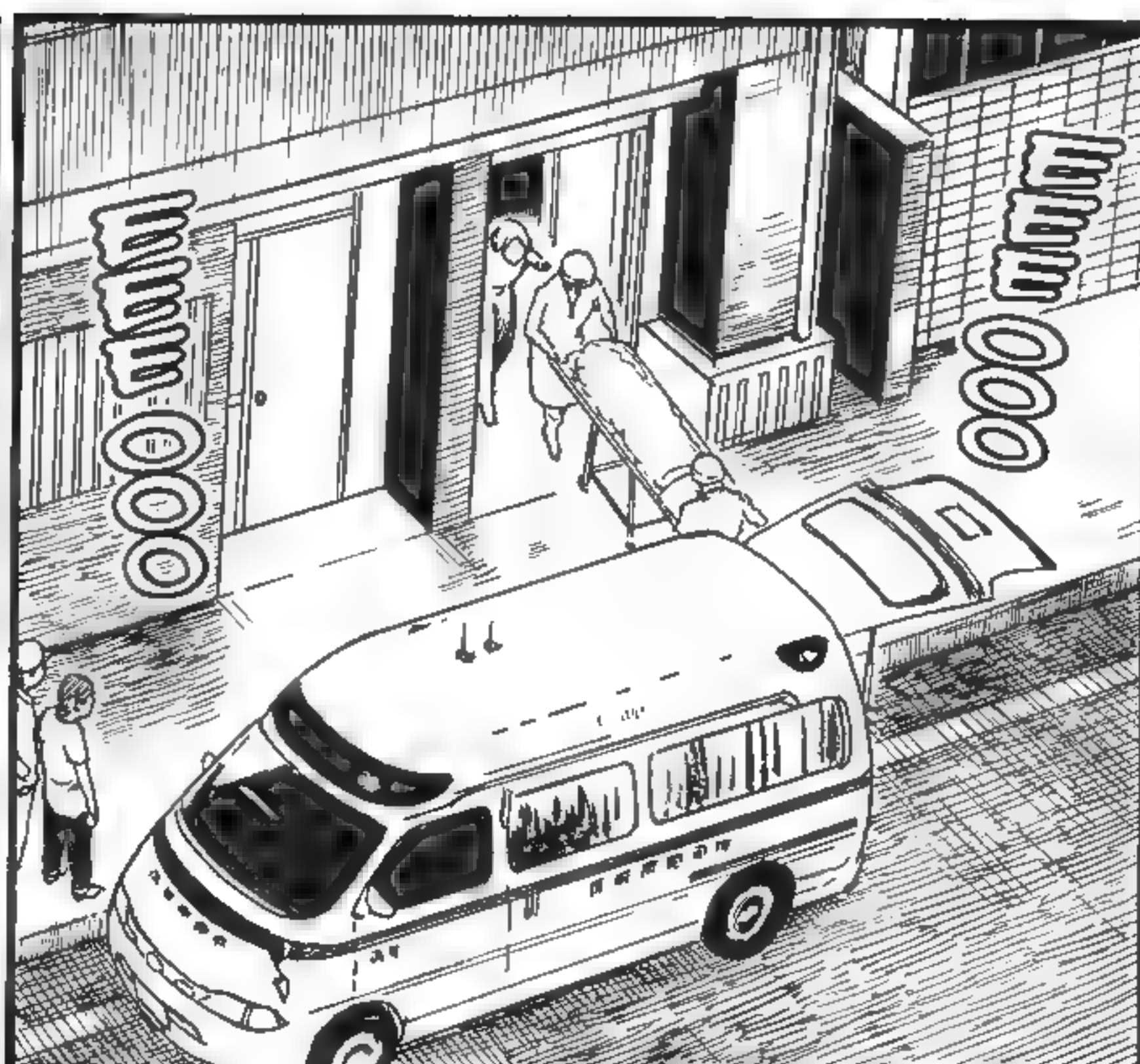
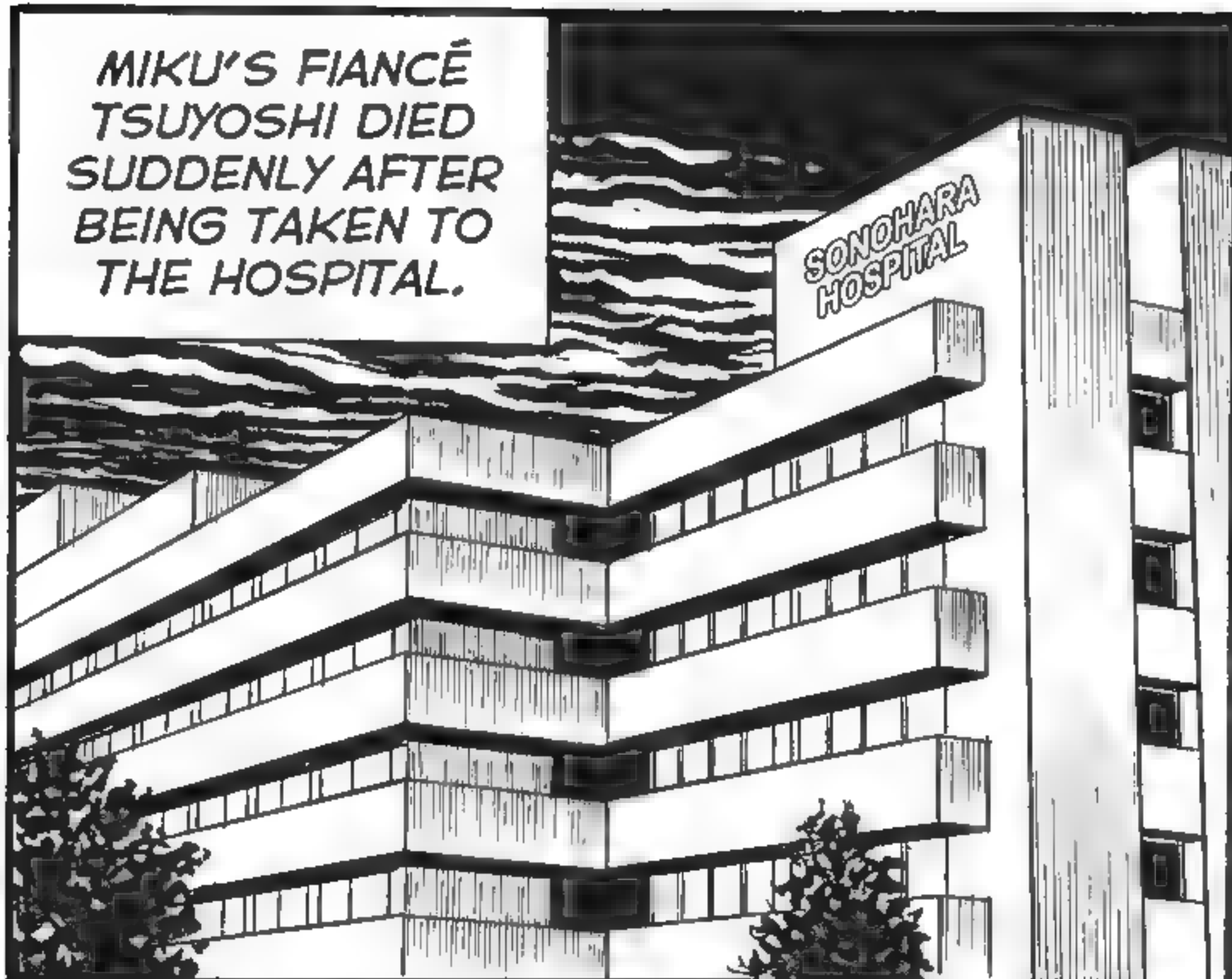
LICK

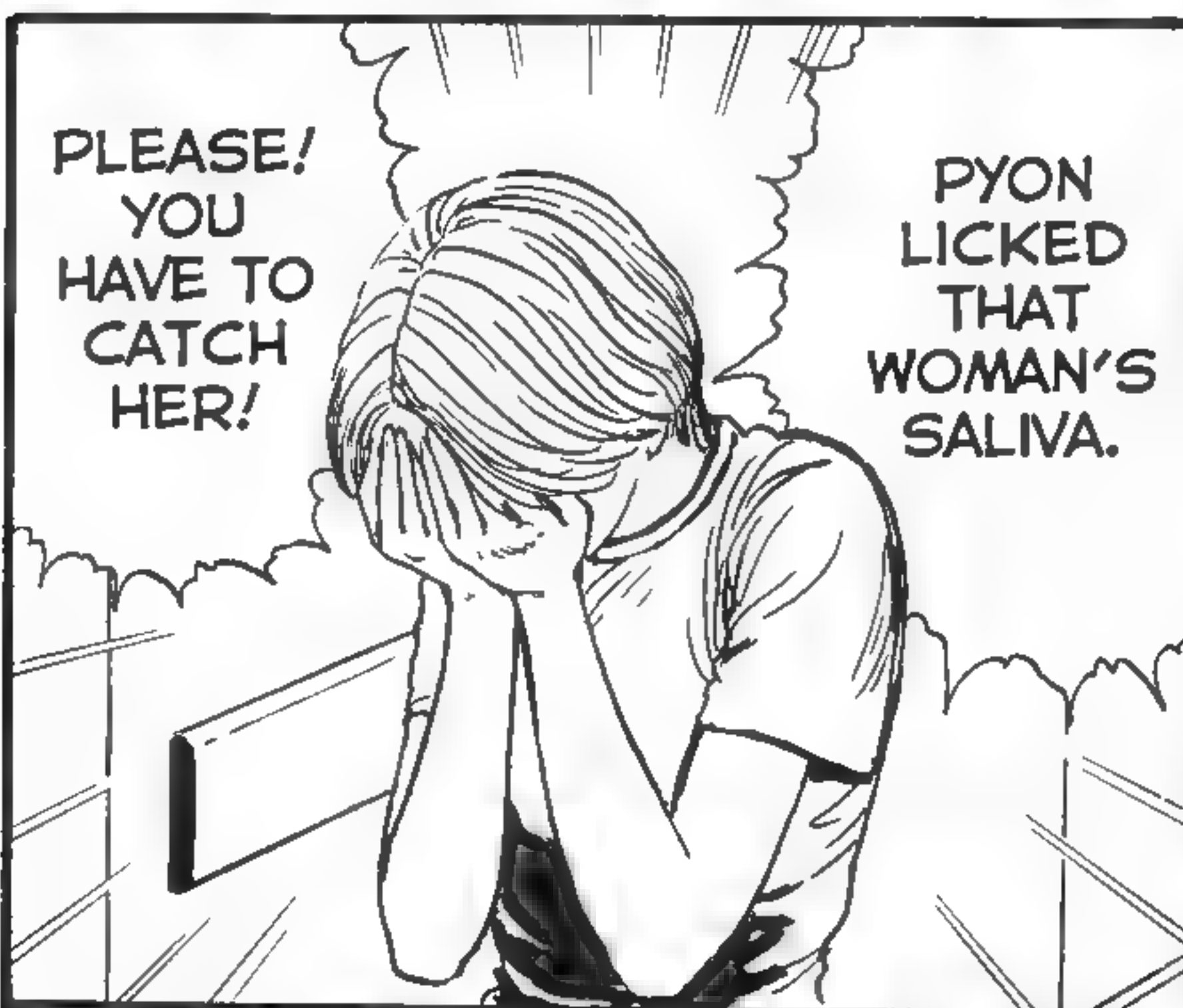
LICK

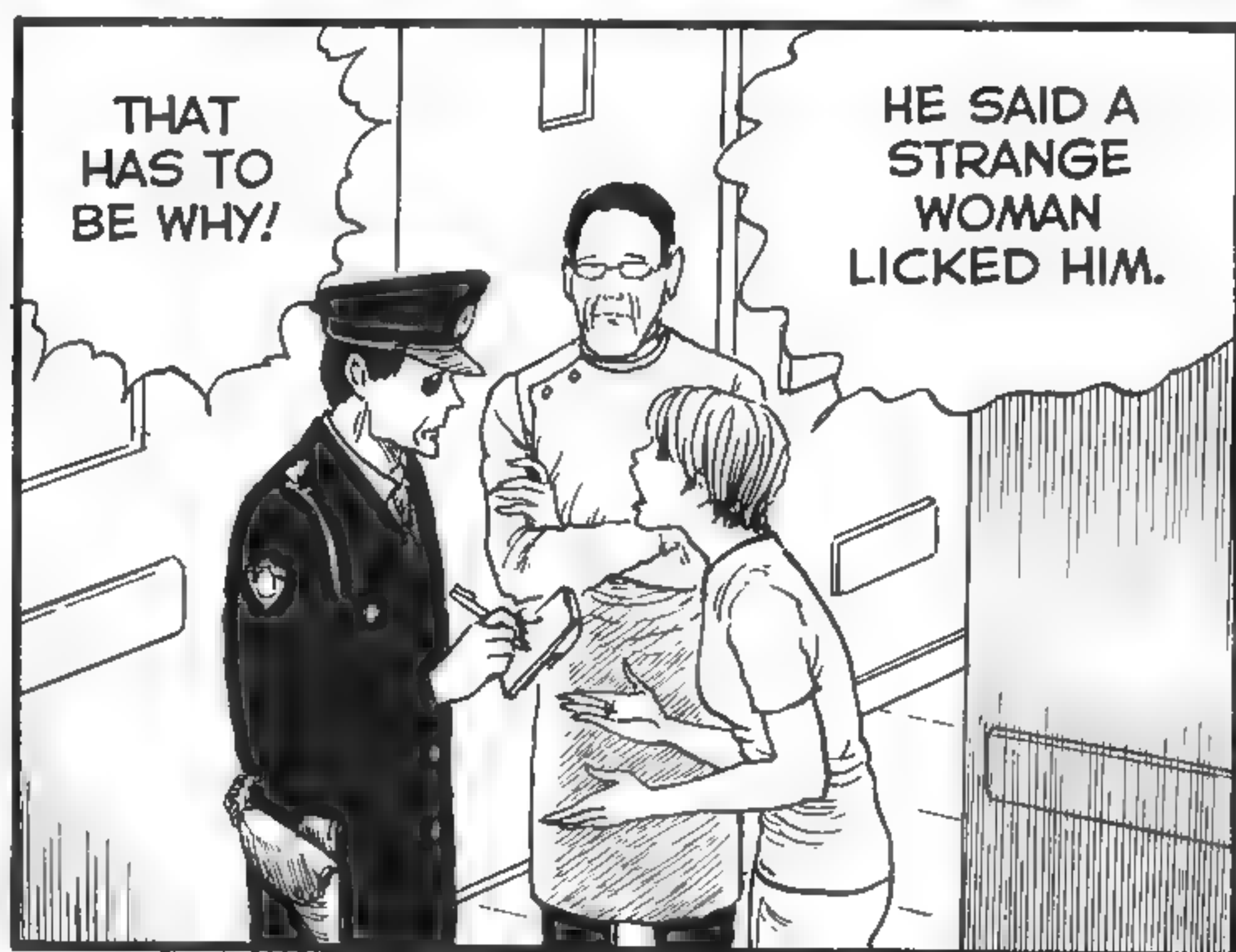
AAH, I'M ALL STICKY... IT'S THAT WOMAN'S SPIT. SO GROSS. AND IT SMELLS TERRIBLE...

MIKU, MIND IF I JUMP IN THE BATH?

I'LL RUN ONE NOW.

CHAK
I'LL TURN THE LIGHT ON.
...IT STINGS. I CAN'T SLEEP...
WHAT'S THE MATTER, TSUYOSHI?
AAH, SOMETHING'S WEIRD...
!
PYON ?!
FROTH FROTH
WHAT'S WRONG?!
TSUYOSHI!!

MIKU'S FIANCÉ TSUYOSHI DIED SUDDENLY AFTER BEING TAKEN TO THE HOSPITAL.

SONOHARA HOSPITAL

PLEASE! YOU HAVE TO CATCH HER!

PYON LICKED THAT WOMAN'S SALIVA.

THAT HAS TO BE WHY!

HE SAID A STRANGE WOMAN LICKED HIM.

...THE NIGHT WAS ONCE AGAIN WARM AND HUMID.

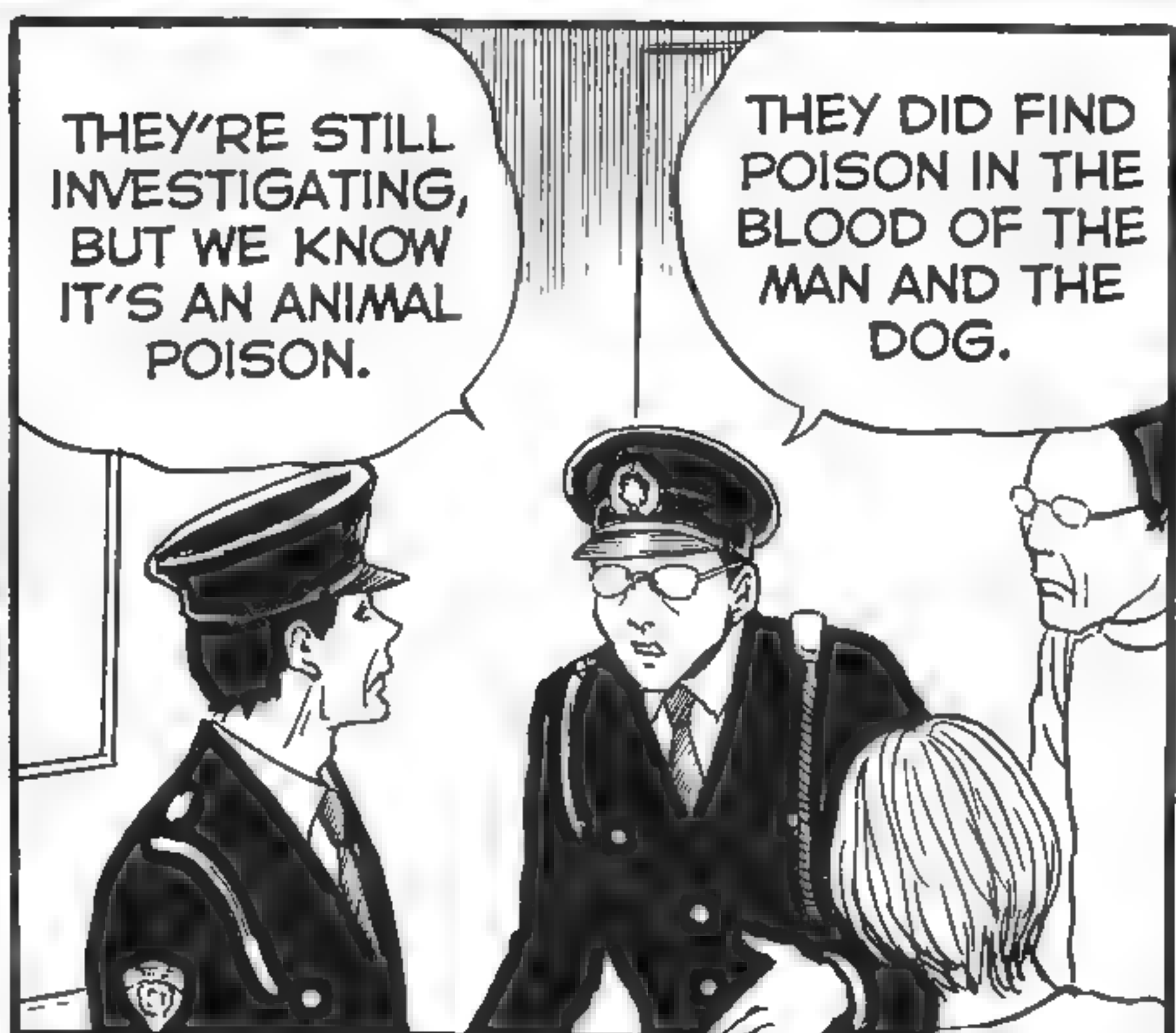
A FEW DAYS LATER ...

TSUMURA SHOP

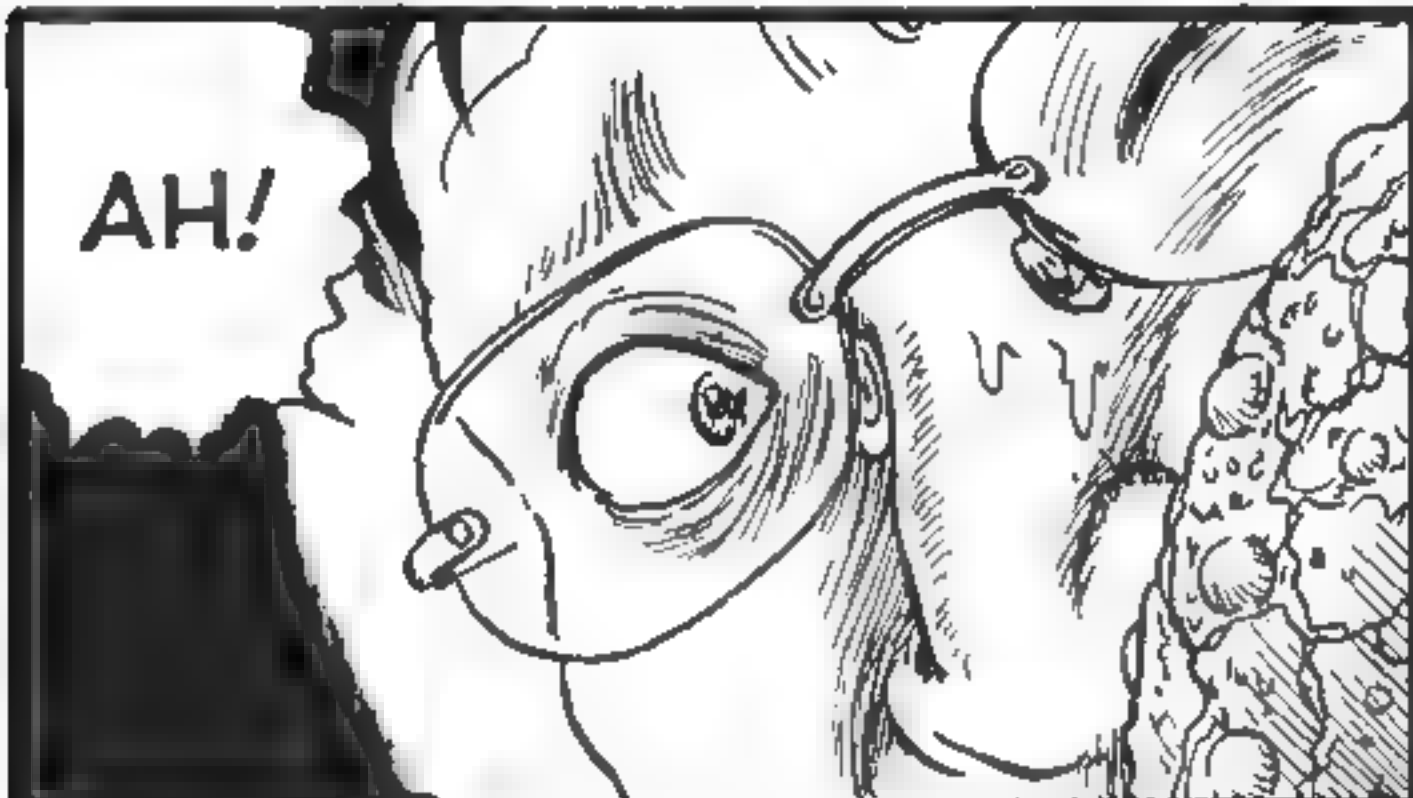
THEY'RE STILL INVESTIGATING, BUT WE KNOW IT'S AN ANIMAL POISON.

THEY DID FIND POISON IN THE BLOOD OF THE MAN AND THE DOG.

...

LICK LICK
STOP IT! WHO *ARE* YOU?!
LICK

THAT TICKLES! HA HA HA HA HA...
LICK LICK LICK
HEY! WHOA! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! YOU CAN'T JUST—

AH!

AROUND MIDNIGHT, A MAN IN THE CITY OF X WAS TAKEN TO HOSPITAL, COMPLAINING OF A SKIN ABNORMALITY. HE DIED EARLY THIS MORNING.

THE CAUSE OF DEATH IS THOUGHT TO BE POISON, AND THERE HAVE BEEN A SPATE OF SIMILAR INCIDENTS IN THIS AREA RECENTLY. THE VICTIMS ALL TESTIFY THAT A PASSING WOMAN ON THE STREET LICKED THEM, SO POLICE ARE...

CAREFUL IF YOU'RE OUT AT NIGHT!

I GUESS THE WOMAN'S TONGUE IS POISONOUS!

WHO ON EARTH IS SHE?!

SHE CAN'T BE HUMAN...

A MONSTER?!

NO SUCH MONSTER EXISTS! MAYBE SHE WAS JUST BORN DIFFERENT?!

OR MAYBE SHE WEARS A FILM COATED WITH POISON OVER HER TONGUE?

BUT YOU'RE OKAY IF YOU GET LICKED AS LONG AS YOU WASH IT OFF RIGHT AWAY.

WE HAVE TO FORM A WATCH GROUP AND CATCH THIS CRIMINAL!

TRUDGE
TRUDGE
TRUDGE
TRUDGE
TRUDGE
WHAT'S THIS LICKING WOMAN LOOK LIKE ANYWAY?
I DON'T WANT TO GET LICKED WHEN WE CATCH HER.
THAT'S WHY WE HAVE THE WATER. WE CAN WASH IT OFF RIGHT AWAY.
I HEARD THE LICKING WOMAN SHOWS UP A LOT...
...ON WARM, HUMID NIGHTS LIKE THIS, WITH THE WIND BLOWING.
AAAH!
THAT WAS A WOMAN'S VOICE!
HURRY!

AAAAH!

MY BOY... MY BOY...

HELP! SOME-ONE!

LICK LICK LICK LICK

SOMEONE GO WASH THE KID OFF!

HEH HEH HEH HEH!

STOP!

HEH HEH HEH HEH HEH!

SPLIT UP! WE HAVE TO FIND HER!

WHERE'D SHE GO?!

STOP!

YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY!

HAAH, HAAH...

STOP, LICKING WOMAN!

THERE SHE IS!

AH!

TWIRL

...

Y-YOU KILLED TSUYOSHI AND PYON... YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY WITH IT!

EEEE!!

LICK LICK
LICK LICK

AAAAAH!!

FWSH

HEY!
THERE
SHE IS!

WHD

YOU CAN'T RUN FROM ME!

THIS JUST IN.

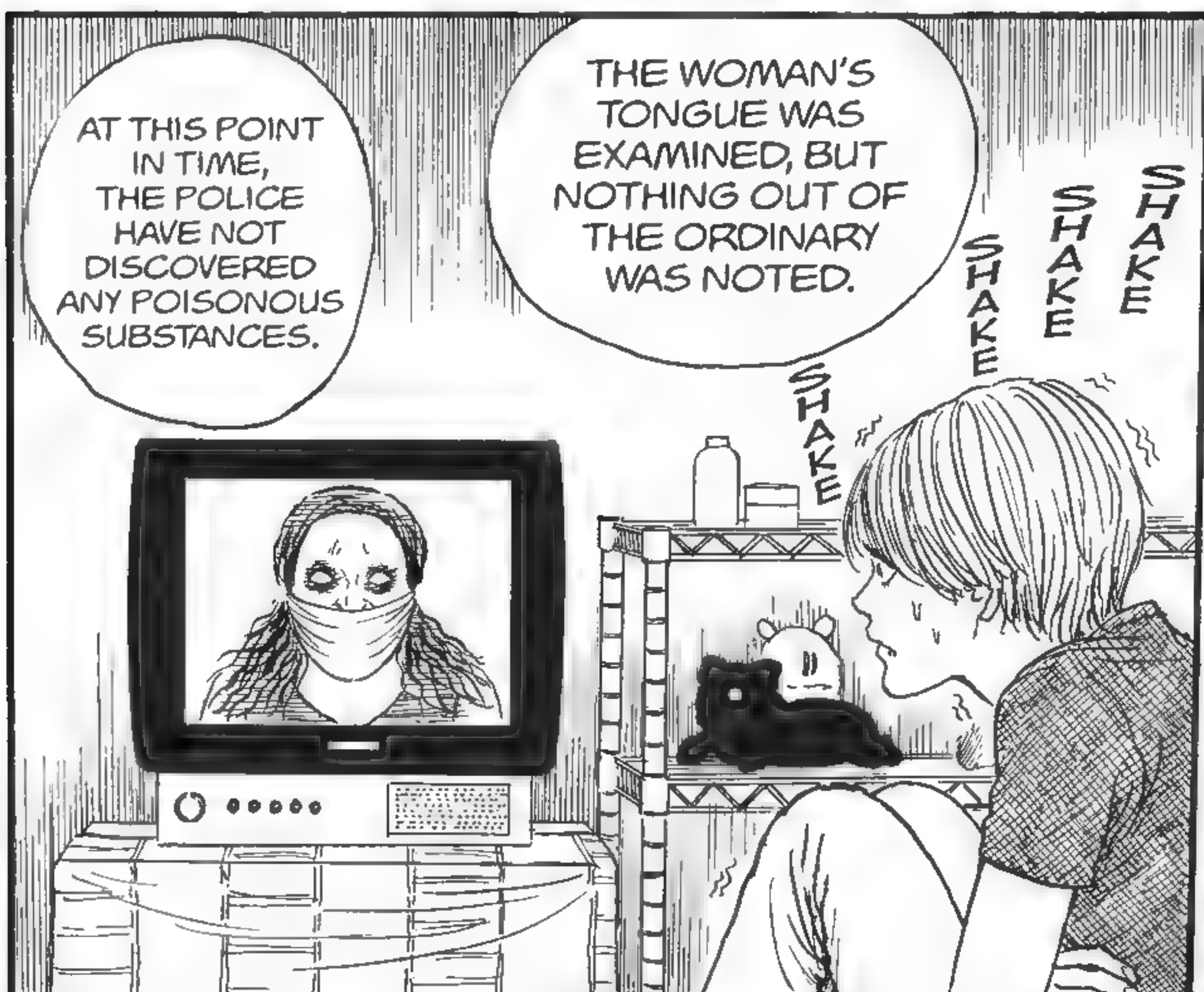
THE LICKING WOMAN, WHO HAS PLUNGED THE ENTIRE COUNTRY INTO A STATE OF FEAR, WAS ARRESTED EARLIER.

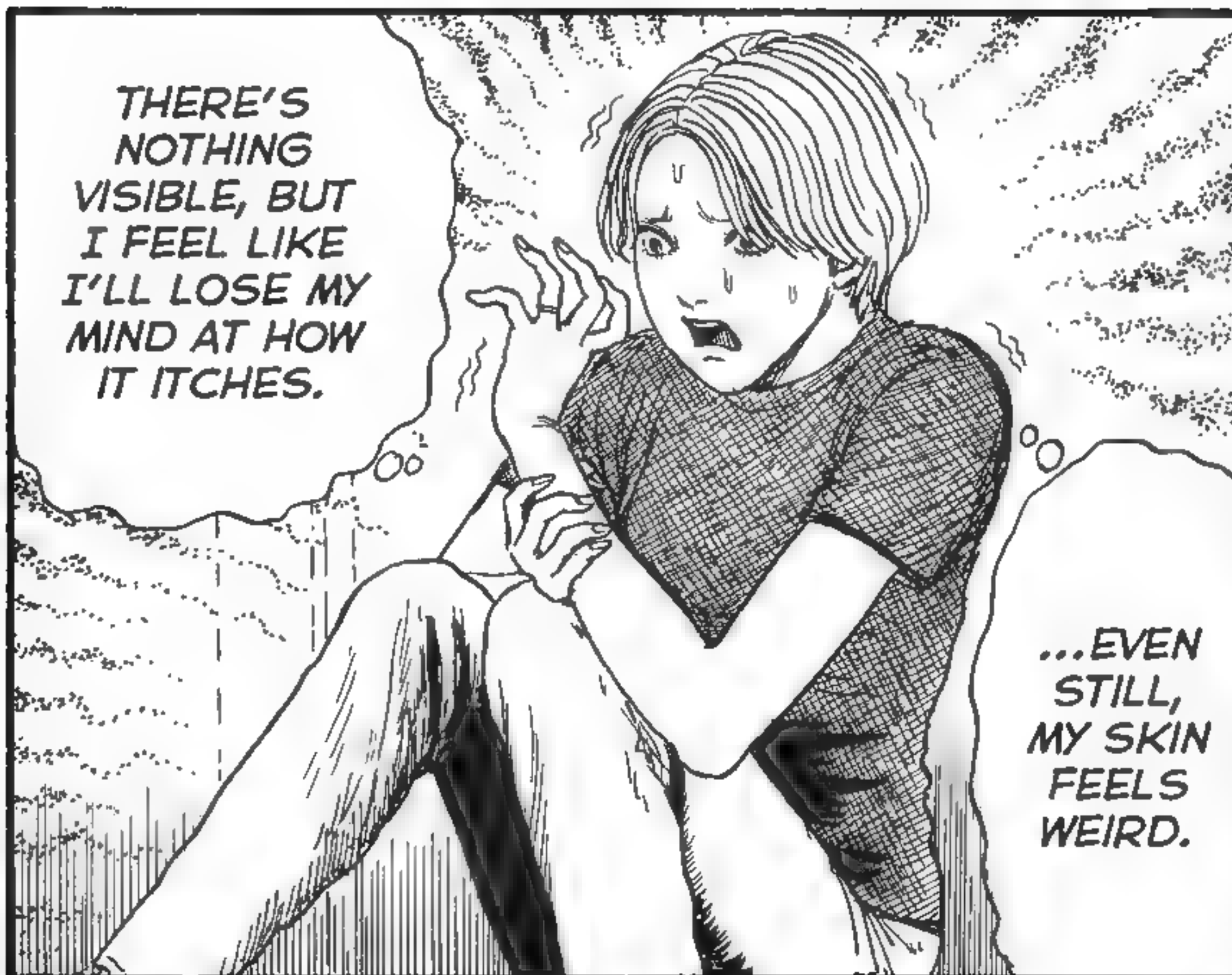
MEMBERS OF A LOCAL NEIGH-BORHOOD WATCH GROUP CAUGHT HER...

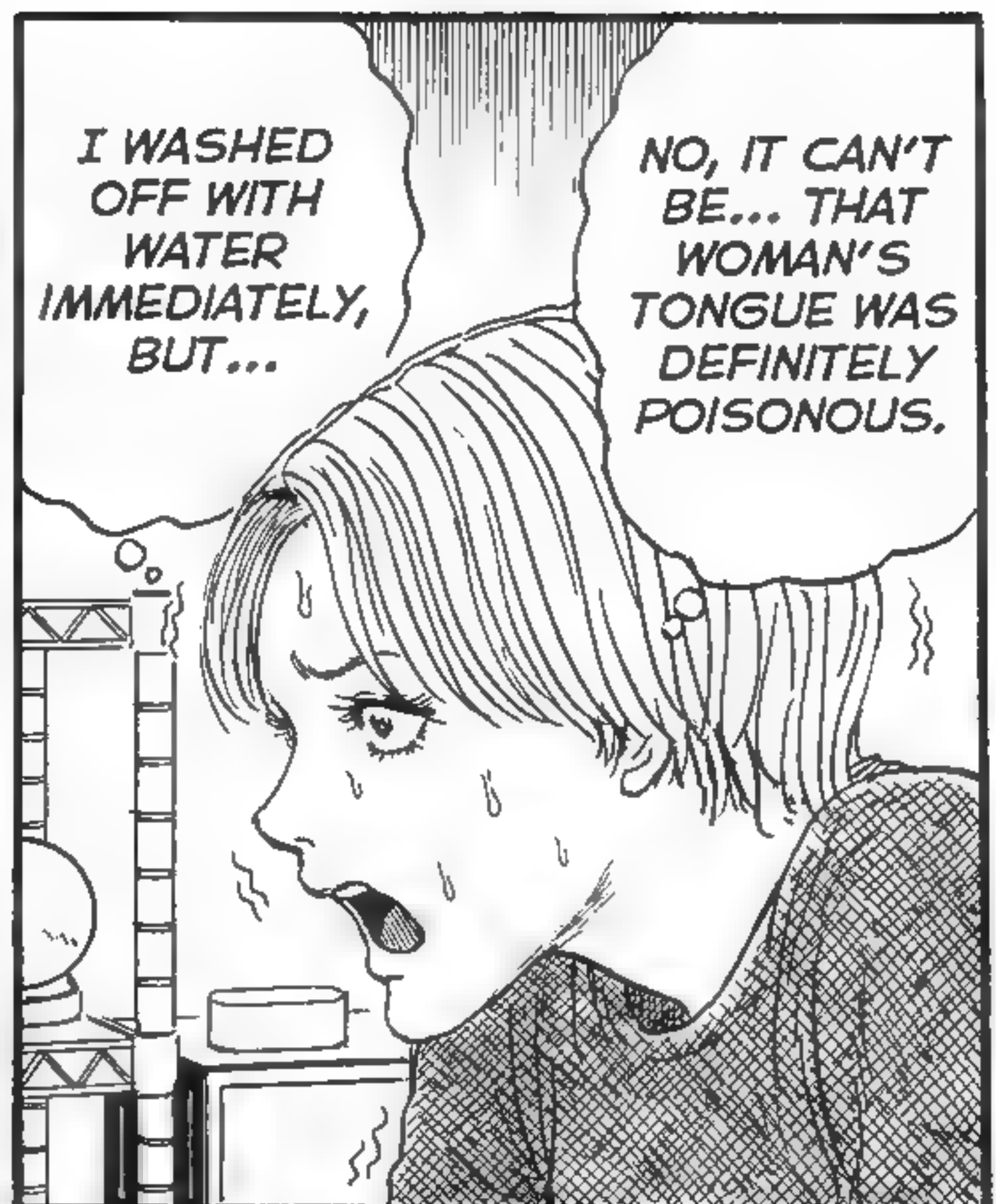
WE HAVE A FOLLOW-UP REPORT. THE SUSPECT'S IDENTITY IS STILL UNKNOWN, BUT SHE IS IN CUSTODY AT THE POLICE STATION.

HER APPOINTED LAWYER IS EXPECTED TO REQUEST A PSYCHIATRIC EXAMINATION.

YAMADA

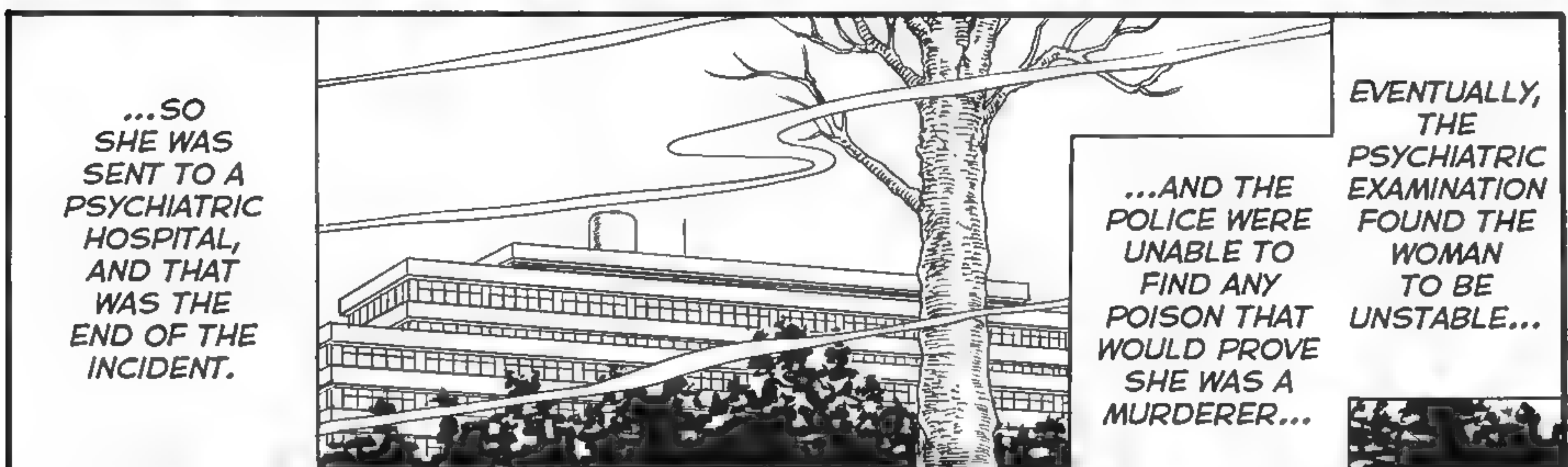
THE WOMAN'S TONGUE WAS EXAMINED, BUT NOTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY WAS NOTED.

AT THIS POINT IN TIME, THE POLICE HAVE NOT DISCOVERED ANY POISONOUS SUBSTANCES.

SHAKE SHAKE SHAKE SHAKE

THERE'S NOTHING VISIBLE, BUT I FEEL LIKE I'LL LOSE MY MIND AT HOW IT ITCHES.

...EVEN STILL, MY SKIN FEELS WEIRD.

I WASHED OFF WITH WATER IMMEDIATELY, BUT...

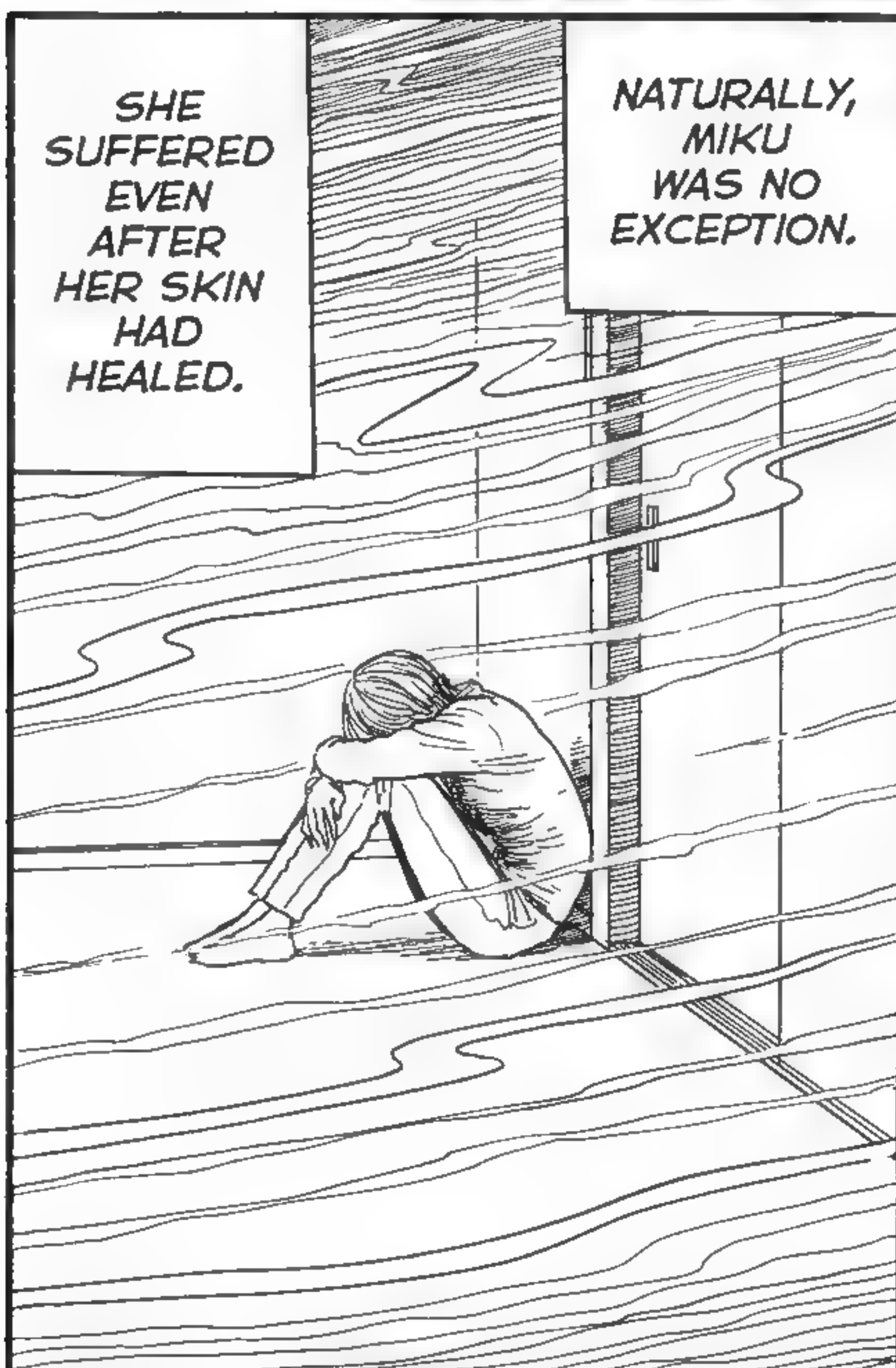
NO, IT CAN'T BE... THAT WOMAN'S TONGUE WAS DEFINITELY POISONOUS.

EVENTUALLY, THE PSYCHIATRIC EXAMINATION FOUND THE WOMAN TO BE UNSTABLE...

...AND THE POLICE WERE UNABLE TO FIND ANY POISON THAT WOULD PROVE SHE WAS A MURDERER...

...SO SHE WAS SENT TO A PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL, AND THAT WAS THE END OF THE INCIDENT.

HOWEVER, HER VICTIMS REMAINED PARALYZED WITH TERROR.

SOME PANICKED AT A DOG LICKING THEM, WHILE OTHERS COULD NO LONGER EVEN KISS THEIR PARTNERS.

NATURALLY, MIKU WAS NO EXCEPTION.

SHE SUFFERED EVEN AFTER HER SKIN HAD HEALED.

AND THEN, SEVERAL YEARS LATER...

CAFÉ BAR

BAR Time

WHAT A COINCIDENCE. SO YOU'RE A VICTIM OF THE LICKING WOMAN, TOO?

WHAT? YOU ARE, TOO?

YOU JUST SEEMED LIKE ME SOMEHOW... SO YOU REALLY ARE, *HUH?*

I... MY NAME'S NAGAOKA. NICE TO MEET YOU.

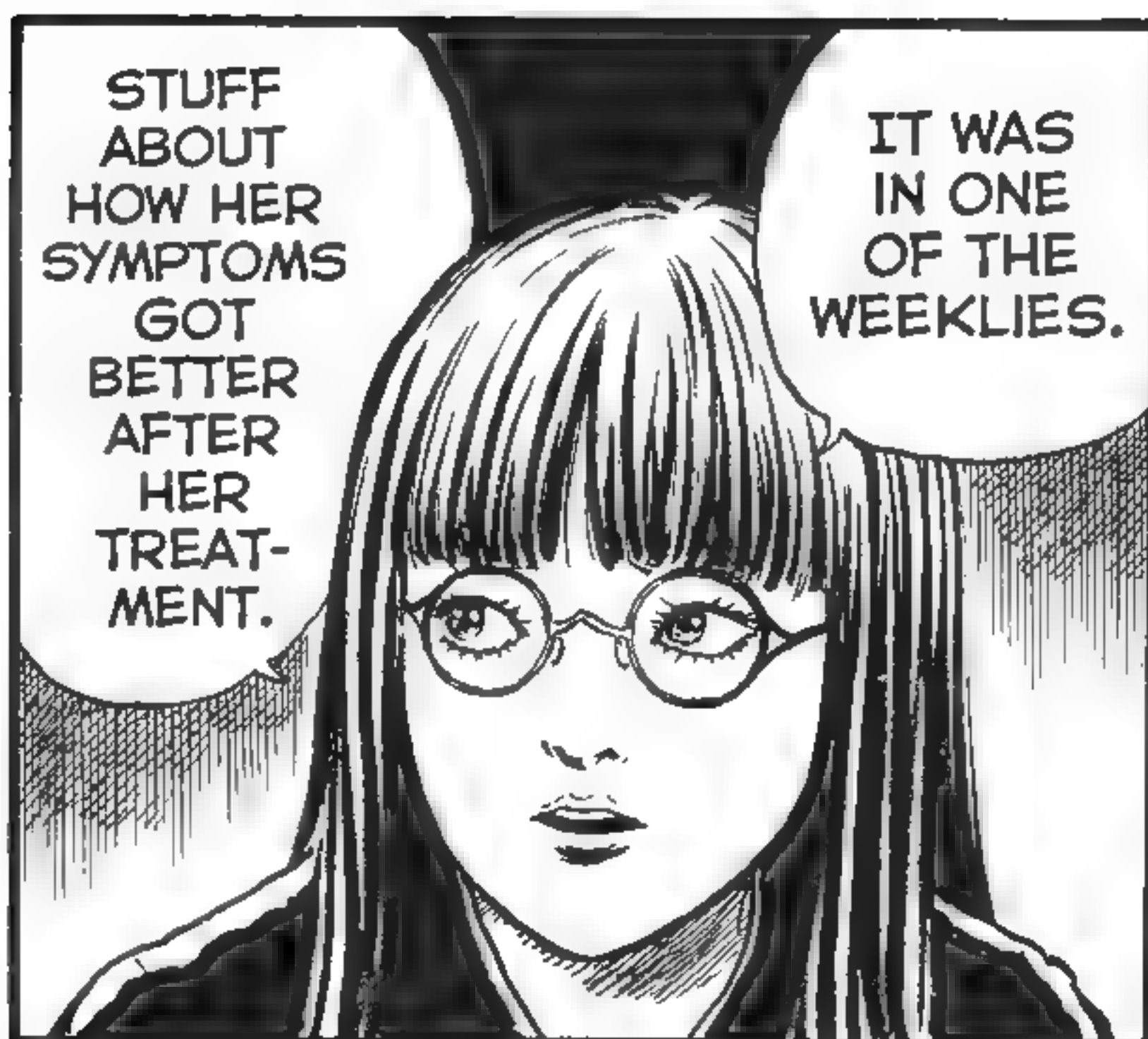
I GUESS A LOT OF US ARE STILL RECOVERING.

BUT LATELY, I'VE BEEN OKAY WHEN A DOG LICKS ME.

SHE MURDERED MY FIANCÉ AND MY DOG. THE HATRED I FEEL FOR THAT WOMAN WILL NEVER GO AWAY.

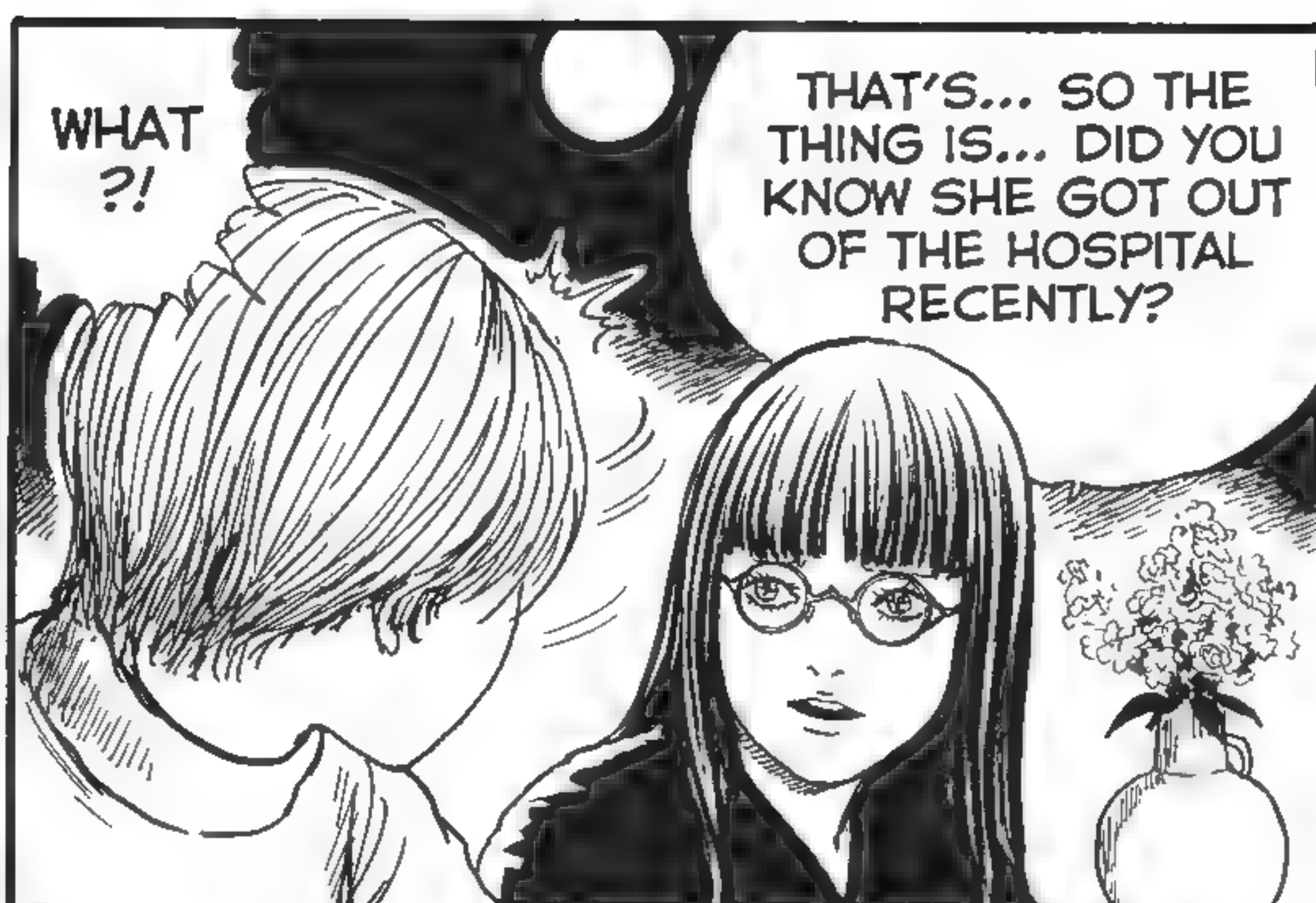
COMPARED WITH THAT HATRED, THE FEAR IS NOTHING...

THAT'S... SO THE THING IS... DID YOU KNOW SHE GOT OUT OF THE HOSPITAL RECENTLY?

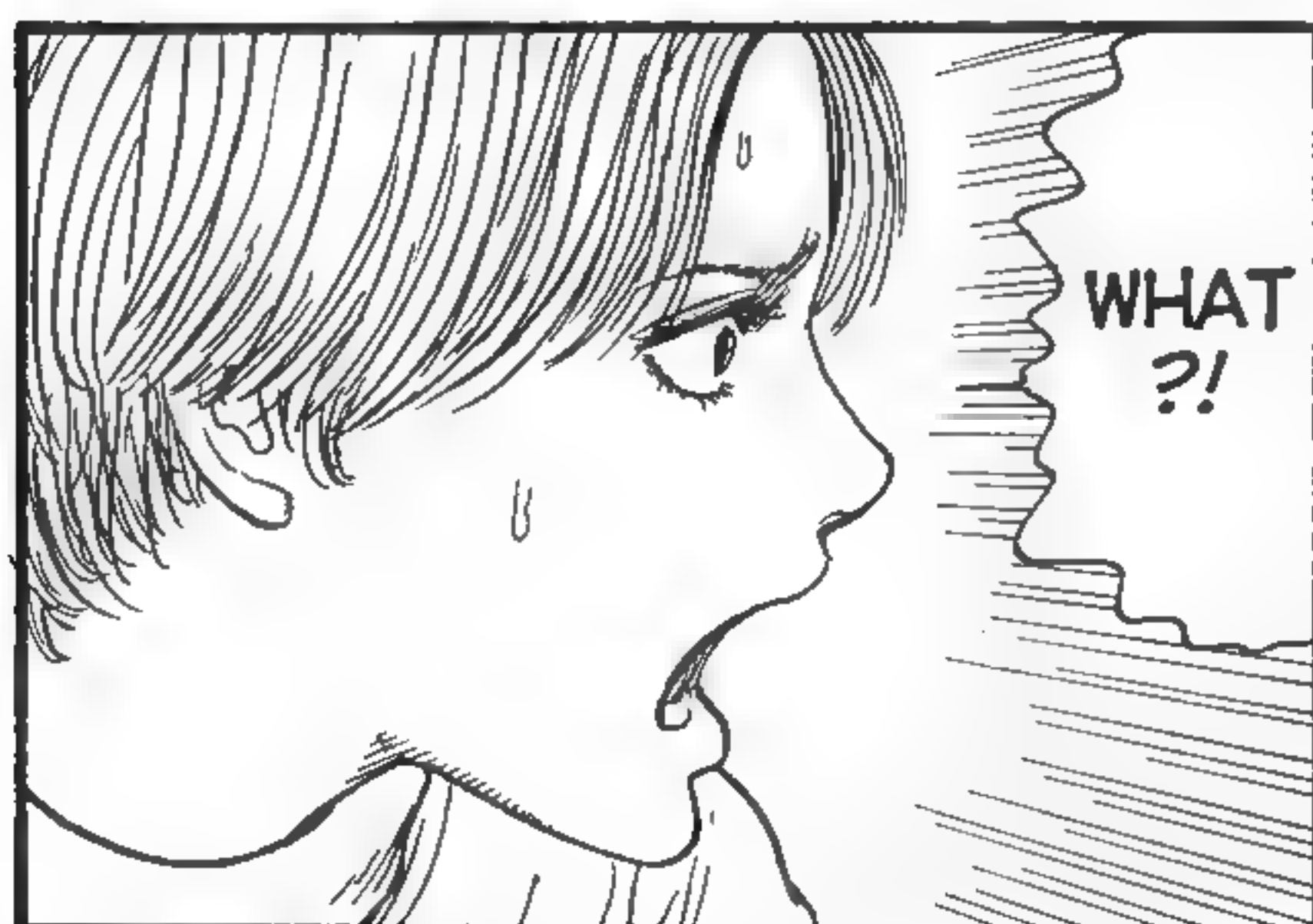
WHAT?!

IT WAS IN ONE OF THE WEEKLIES.

STUFF ABOUT HOW HER SYMPTOMS GOT BETTER AFTER HER TREATMENT.

THAT'S RIDICULOUS.

THAT WOMAN'S NOT HUMAN.

SHE MUST HAVE POSED AS A REGULAR PERSON WHEN SHE WAS ARRESTED.

IF THEY SET HER FREE, SHE'LL ONLY DO THE SAME THING AGAIN.

TRUE...

THE MAGAZINE SAID THAT AFTER SHE WAS DISCHARGED, THEY LOST TRACK OF HER, SO THE POLICE WERE FREAKING.

WHAT?!

MAYBE IT'LL REALLY HAPPEN ALL OVER AGAIN.

THE LICKING WOMAN POPPING UP IN PLACES...

IF IT DOES HAPPEN AGAIN...

...I'LL KILL HER!

KILL HER?

HOW?

ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.

AT ANY RATE, I'LL KILL HER.

...

I HAVE SOME POTASSIUM CYANIDE.

...

WHAT ?!

WE USE IT IN THE LAB AT MY UNIVERSITY.

BUT... HOW WOULD WE GET IT IN THE LICKING WOMAN?

WE MAKE HER LICK IT!

SHE *IS* THE LICKING WOMAN, RIGHT?

IF YOU WANT, I CAN SHARE SOME CYANIDE WITH YOU.

LISTEN. YOU PUT IT ON YOUR SKIN AND GET THE LICKING WOMAN TO LICK YOU.

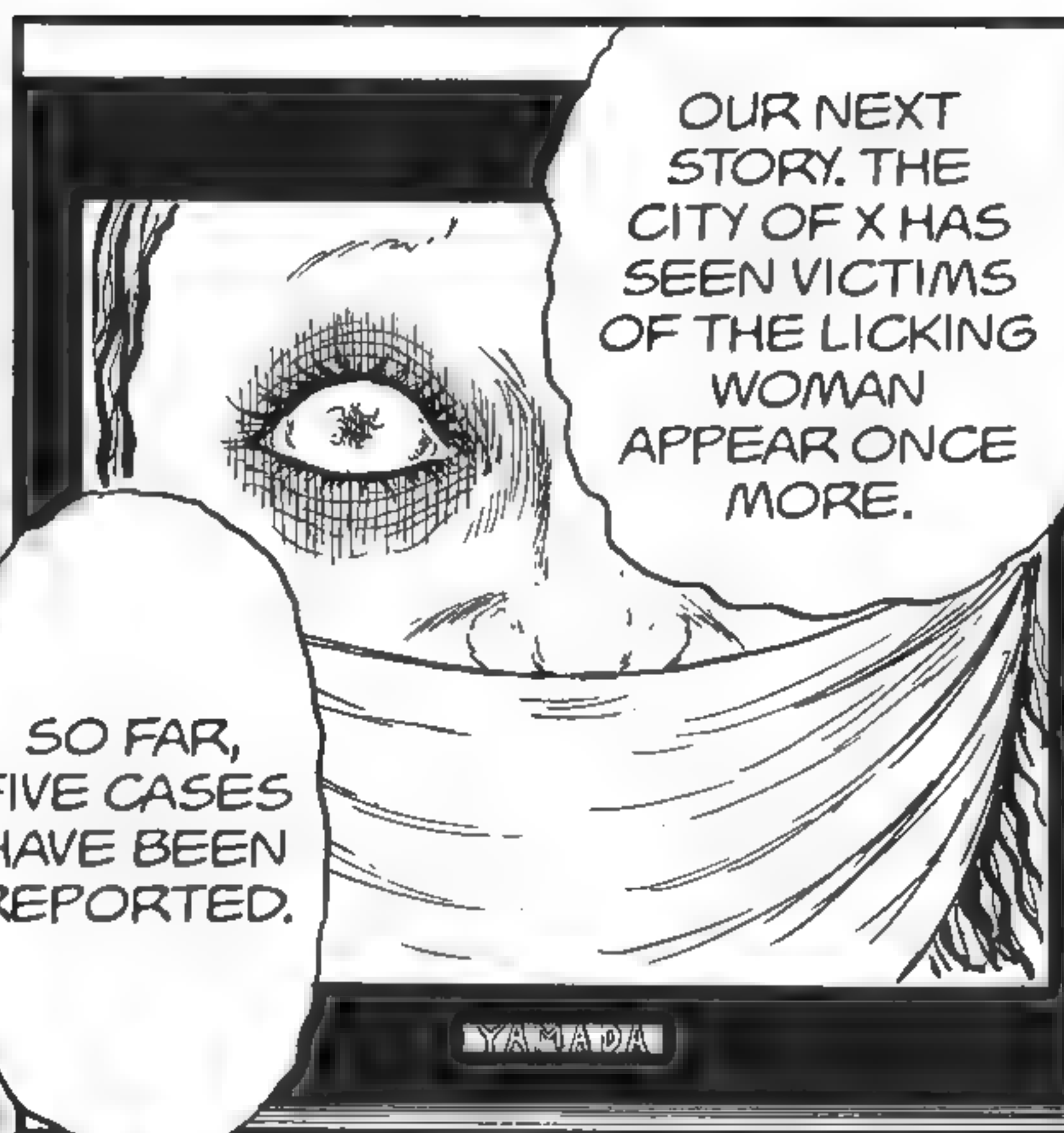
H-HANG ON A MINUTE.

IS IT SAFE TO PUT CYANIDE ON YOUR SKIN?

IT *IS* HAZARDOUS, BUT I THINK IT'S OKAY AS LONG AS YOU DON'T INGEST IT.

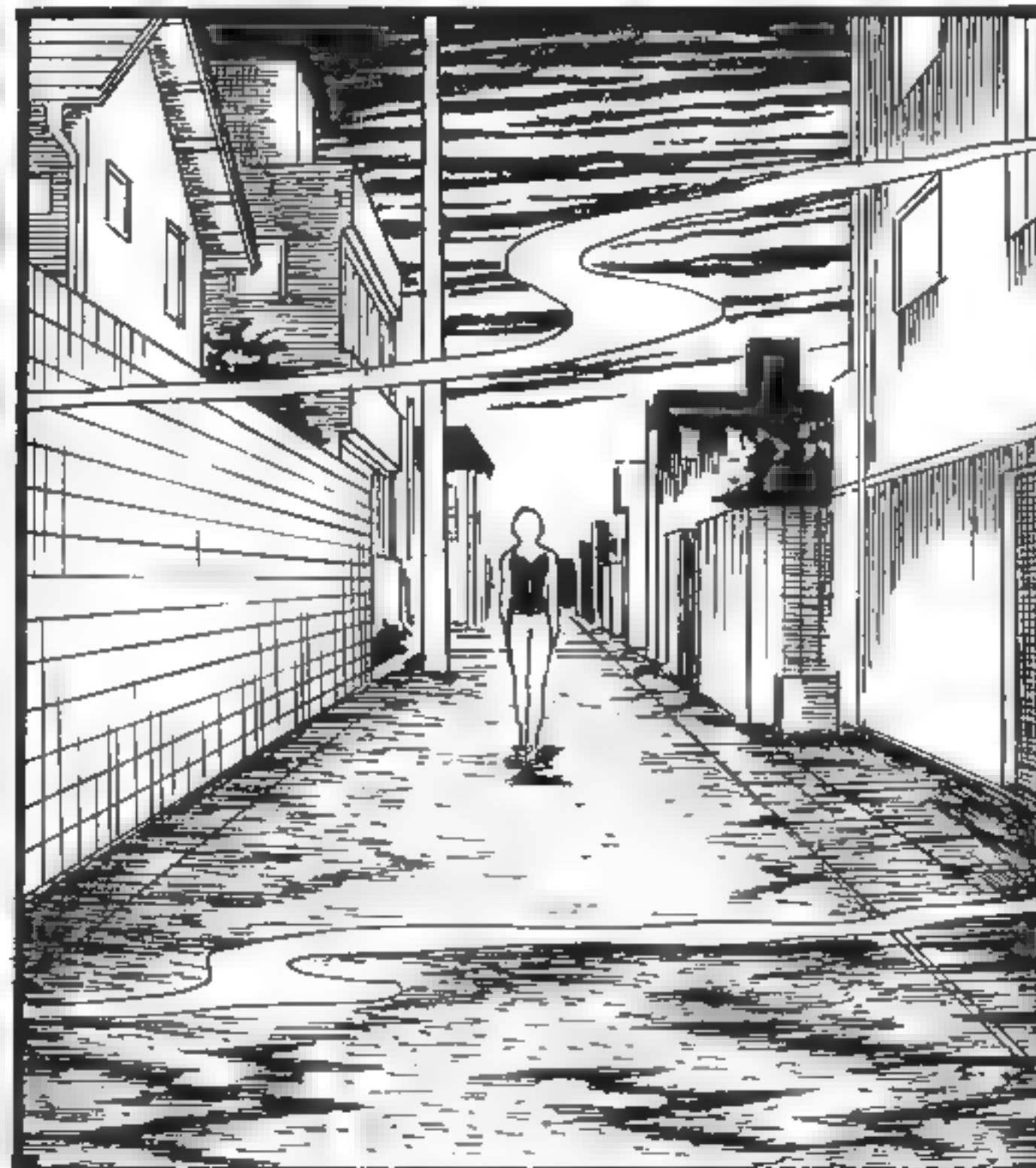
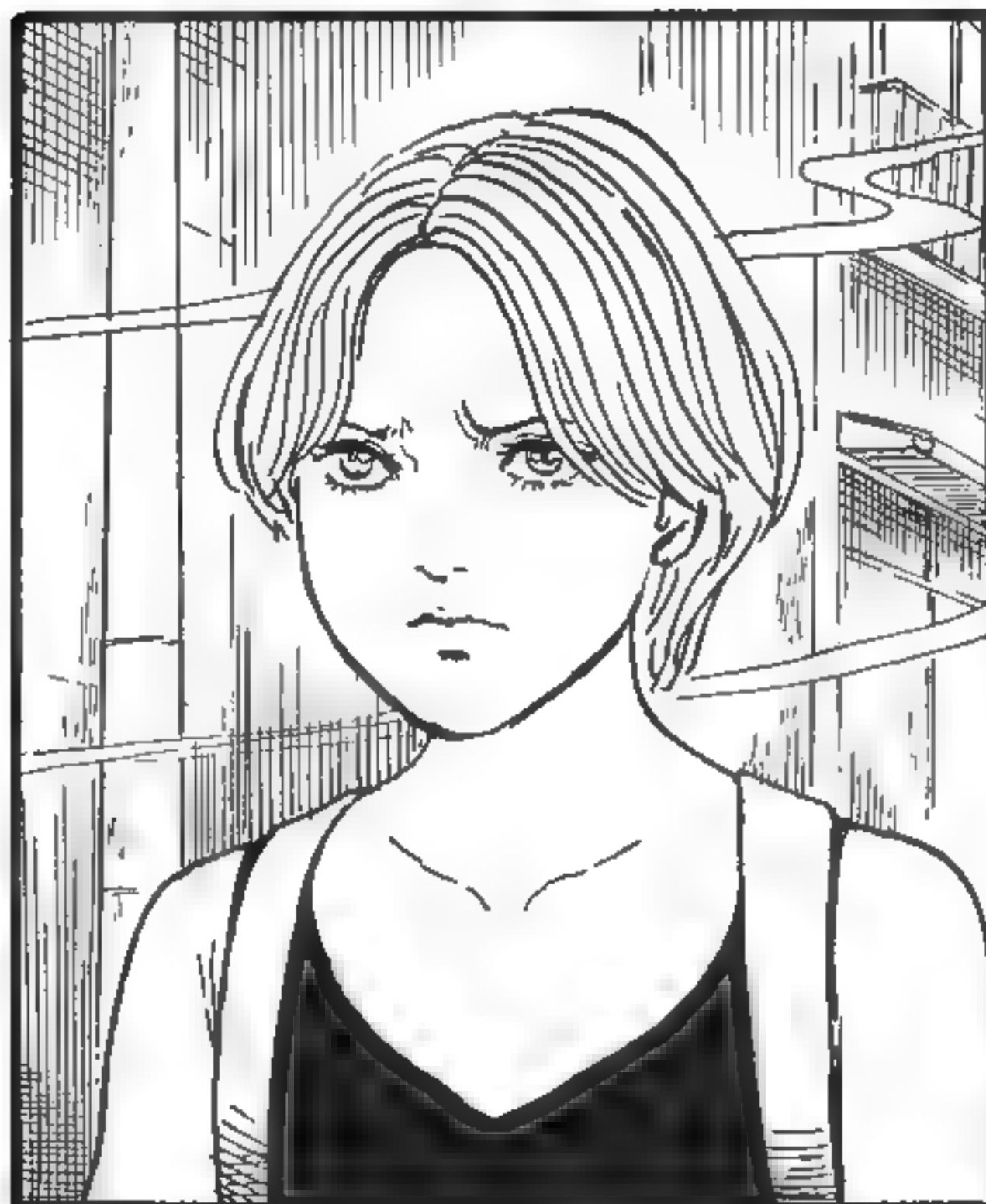
WHEN YOU INGEST IT, THE CYANIDE REACTS WITH YOUR STOMACH ACID, WHICH PRODUCES CYANIDE GAS AND KILLS YOU.

JUST DON'T DRINK IT AND YOU'RE PROBABLY FINE.

THE POLICE ARE CURRENTLY MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO FIND THE WOMAN.

OUR NEXT STORY. THE CITY OF X HAS SEEN VICTIMS OF THE LICKING WOMAN APPEAR ONCE MORE.

SO FAR, FIVE CASES HAVE BEEN REPORTED.

YAMADA

HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN PATROLLING LIKE THIS AT NIGHT?

AND SHE KILLS MORE PEOPLE EVERY DAY...

CLENCH

HYOOO
THIS IS THE ALLEY WHERE I CAUGHT HER BEFORE.
HYOOO
!!
CLENCH

HNGH!

HYOO

SHFT

NGAH!

HNNGGGH!

EEEEAH!!

AAAAAH!!

GRAB
HNGRRRRGH
RIP
SHLRRRRRK

SHUDDER

PLOP

HAAH.

HAAH.

HAAH, HAAH.

THIS WOMAN... SHE REALLY ISN'T HUMAN...

TWITCH TWITCH

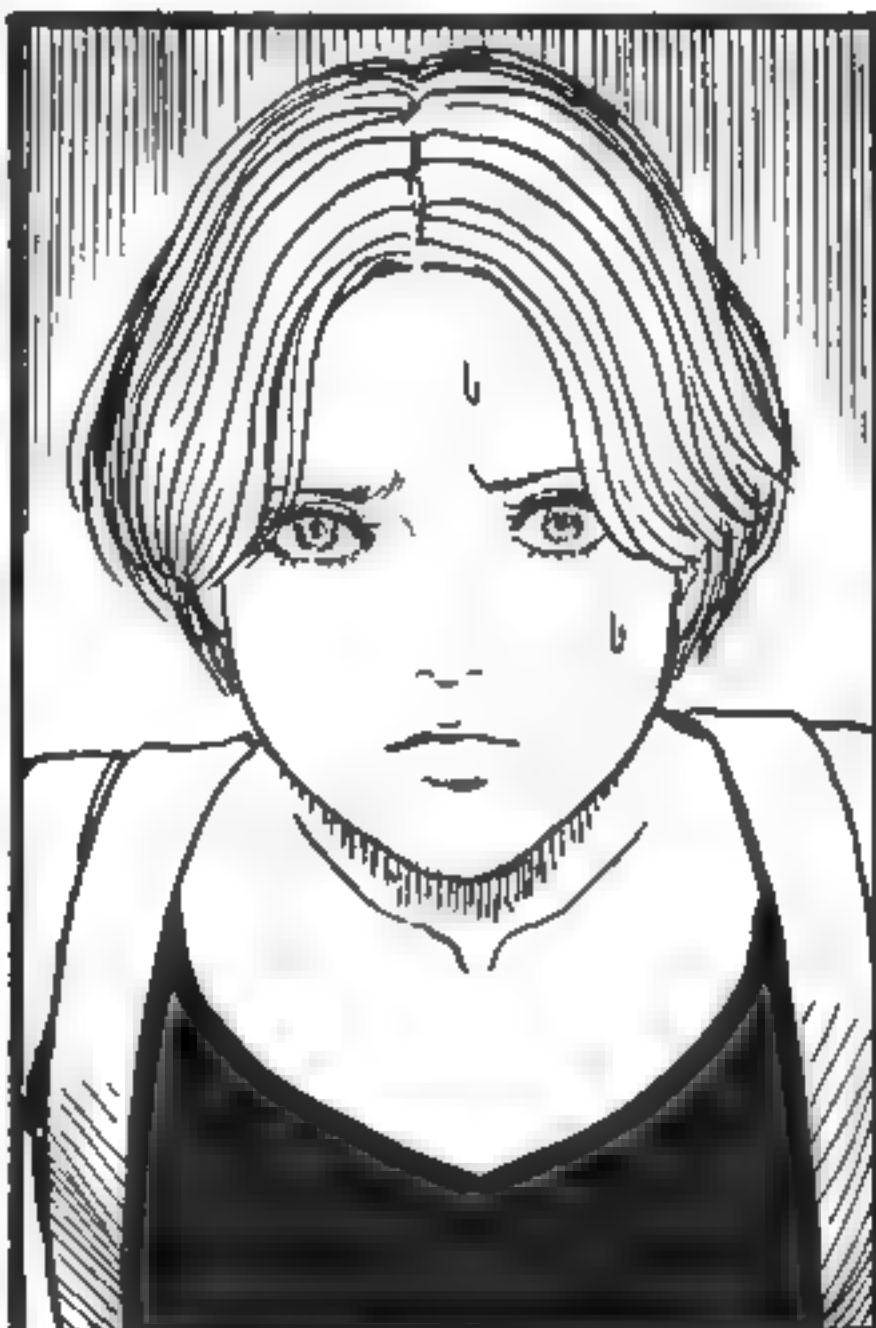
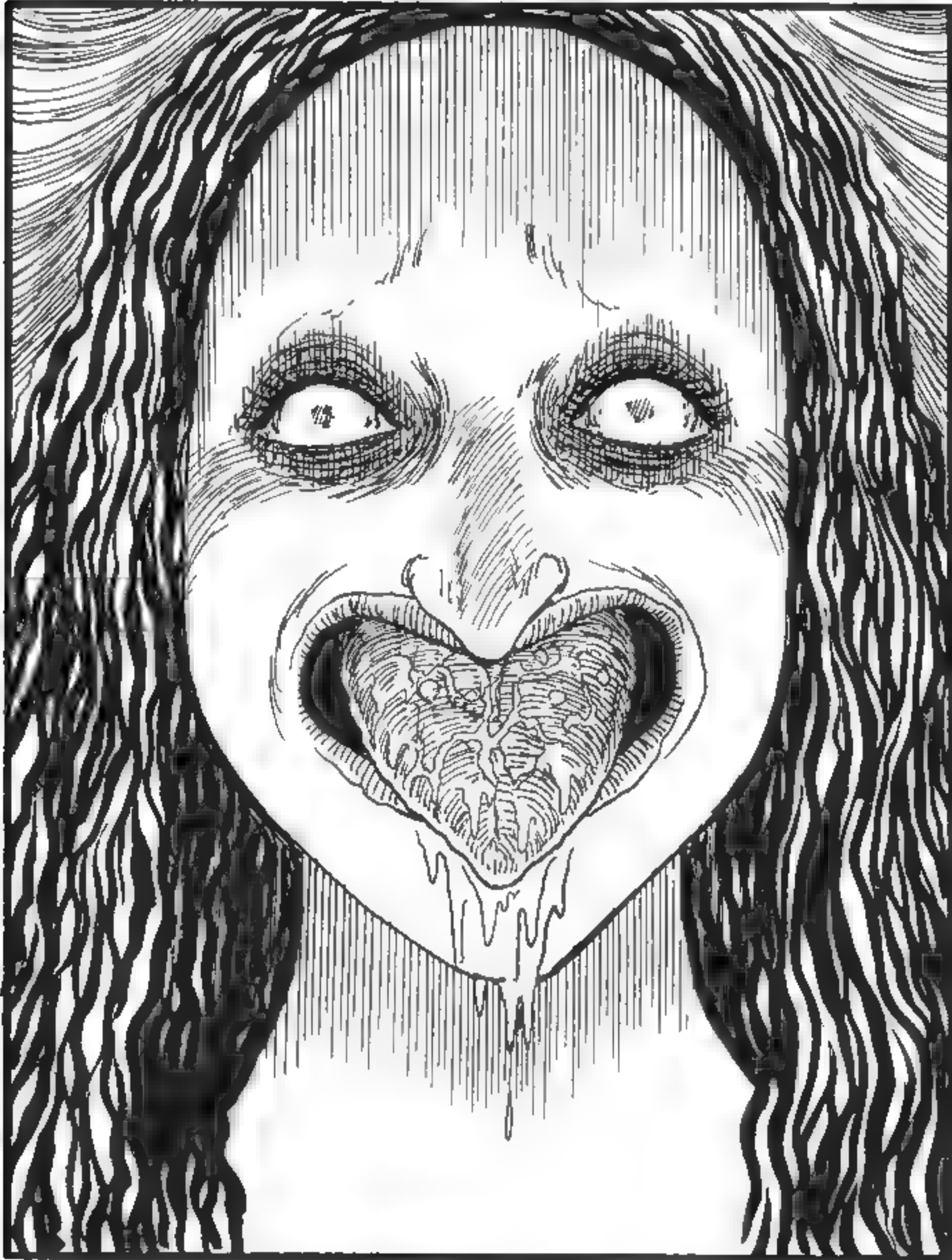
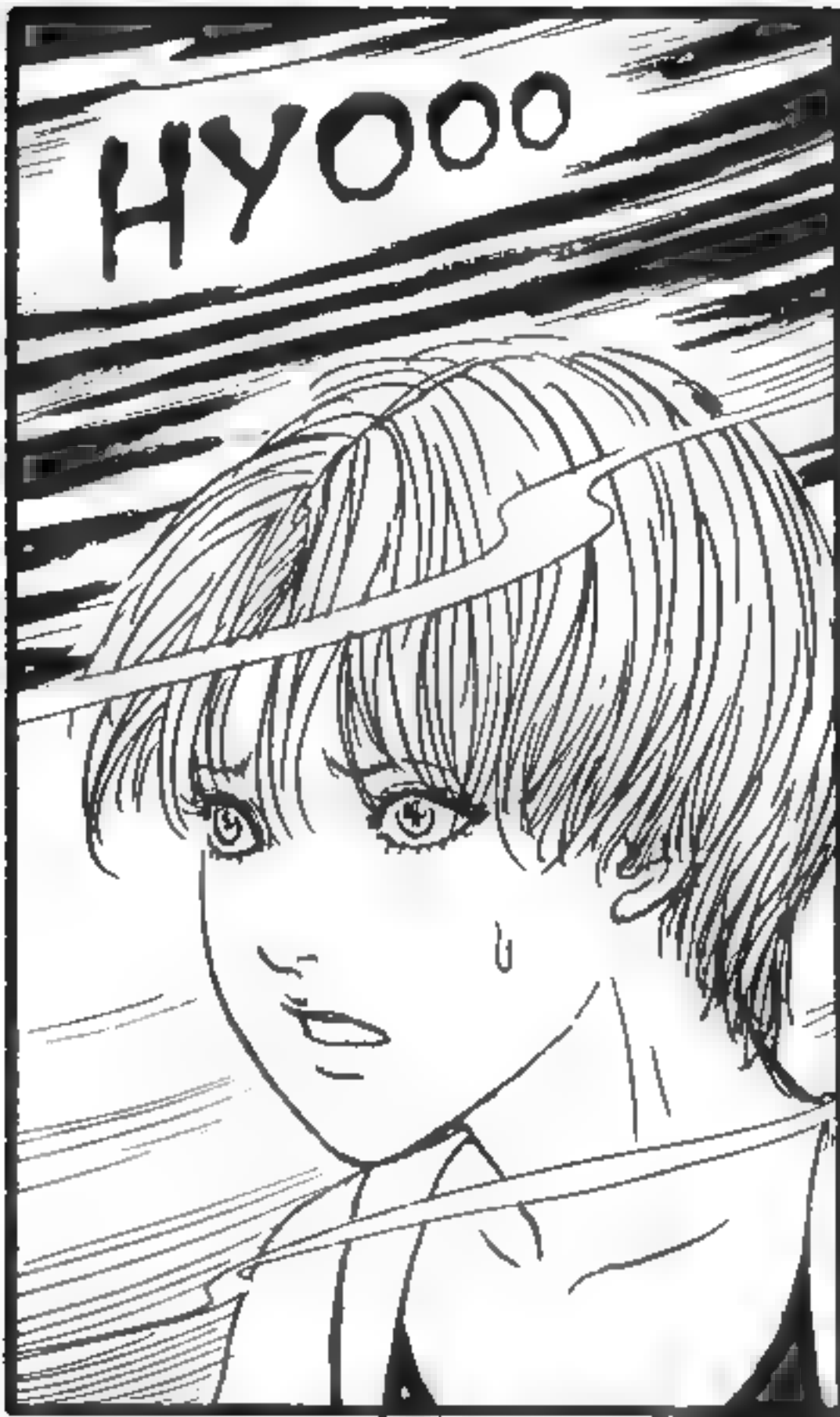
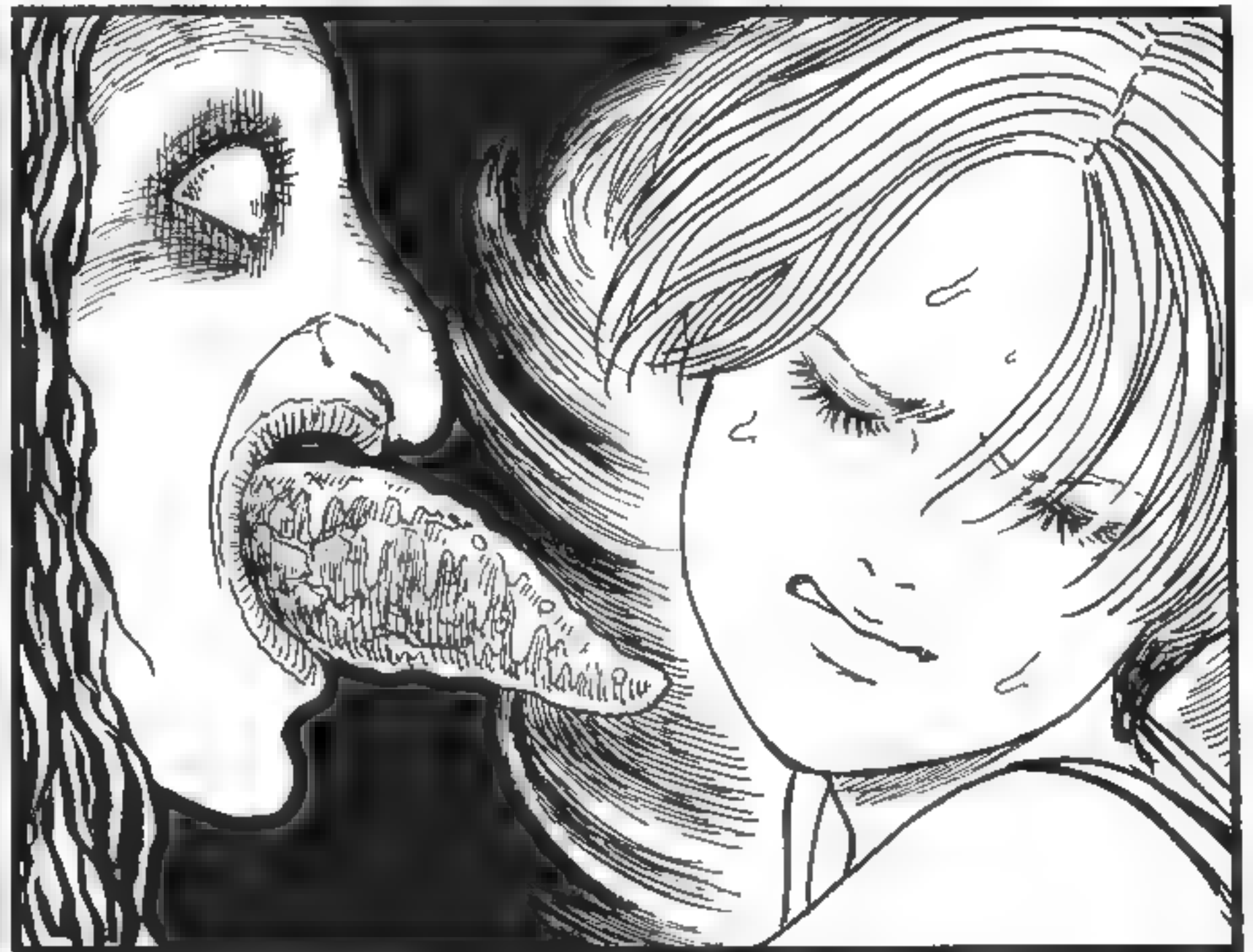
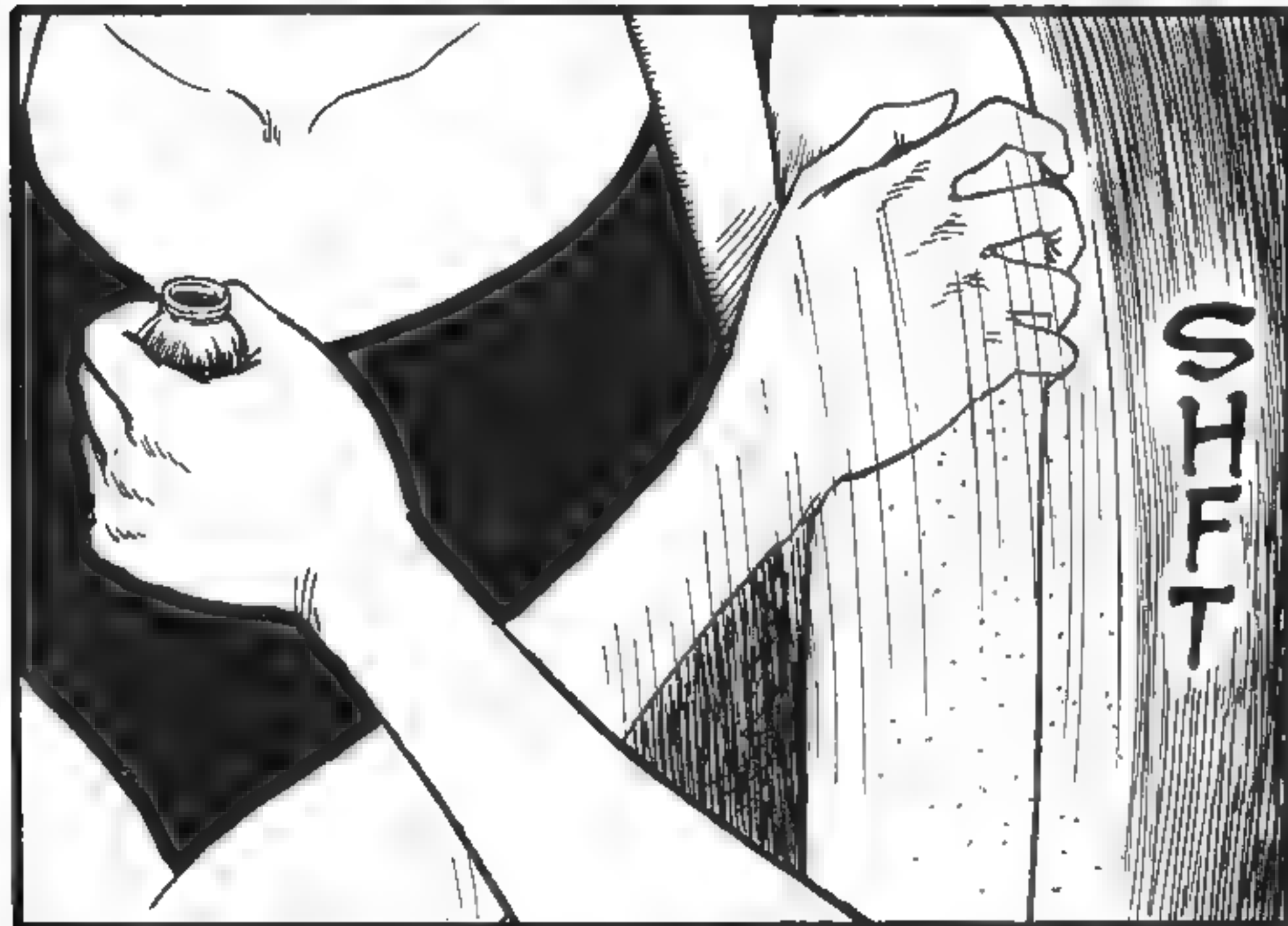
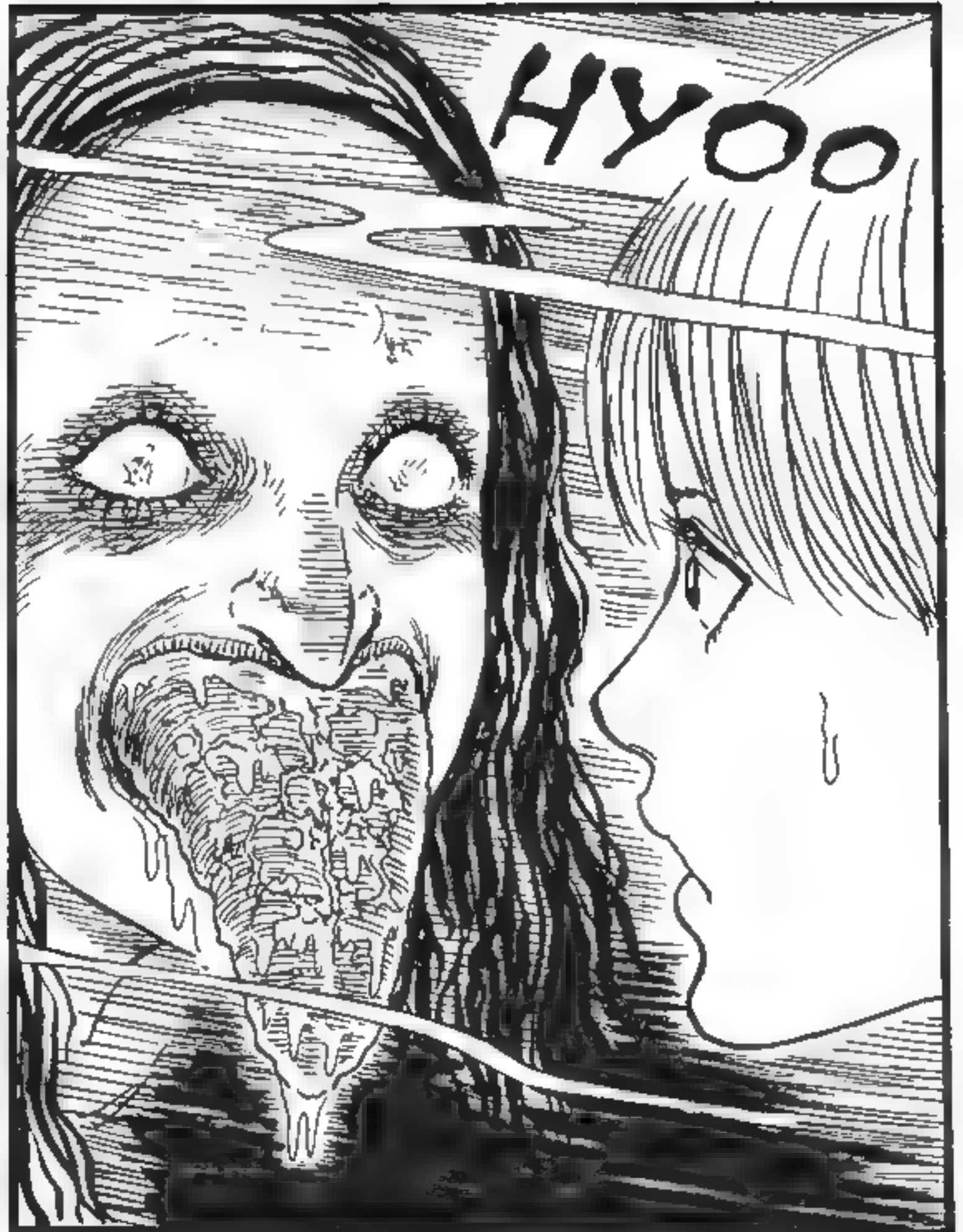
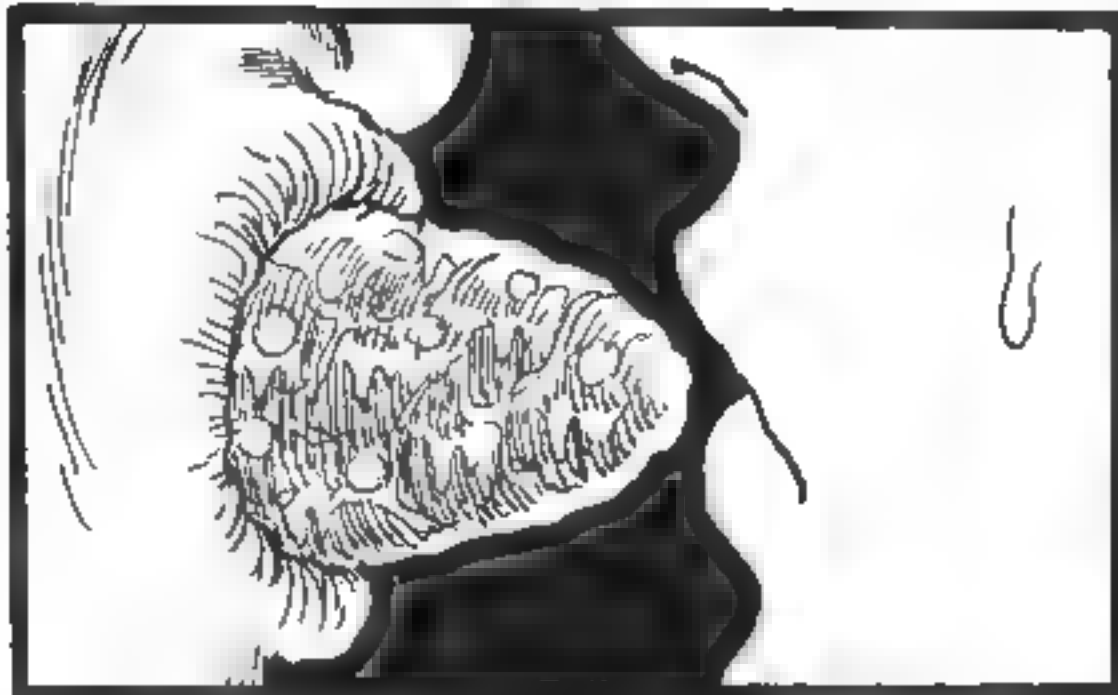
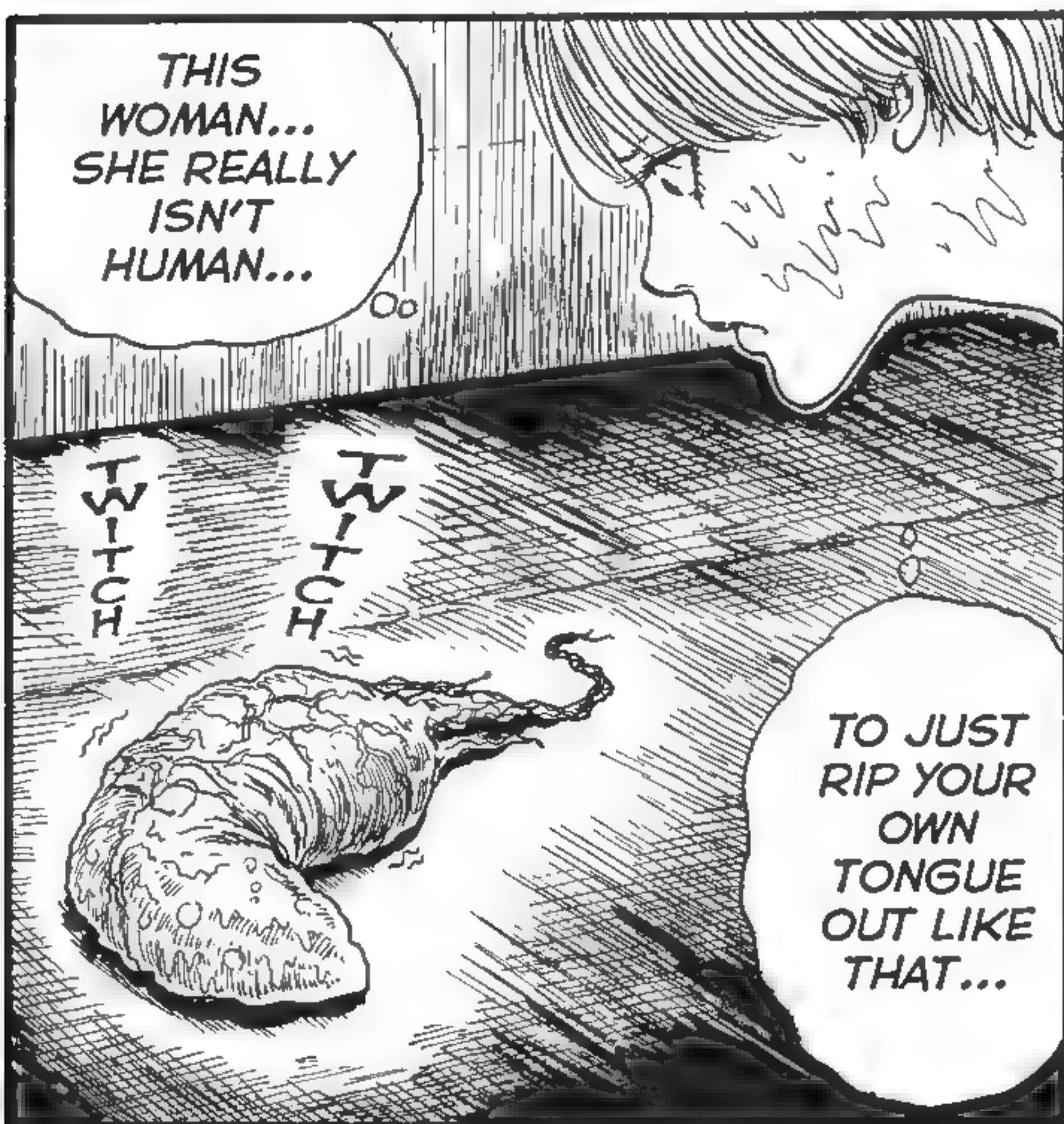
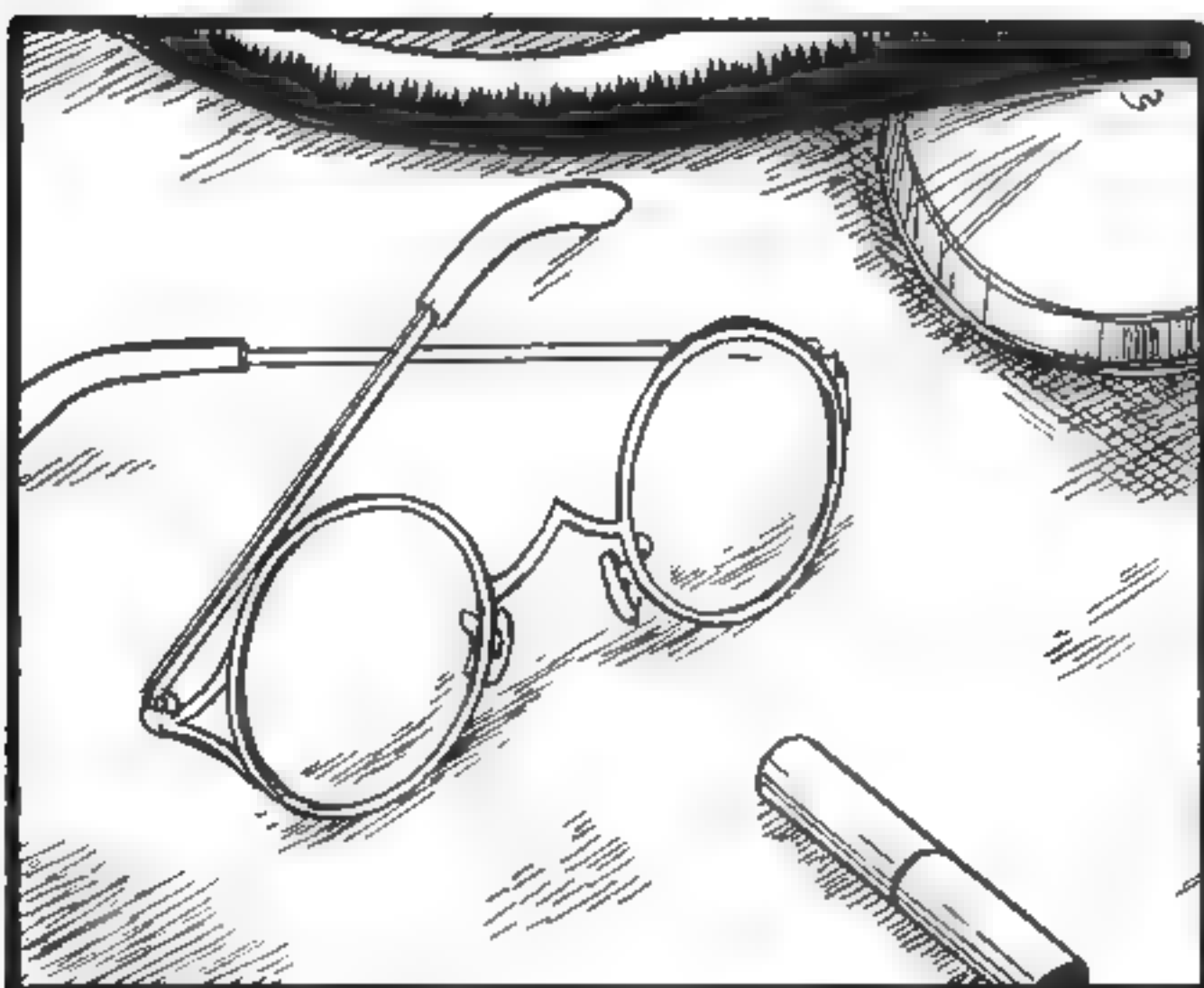
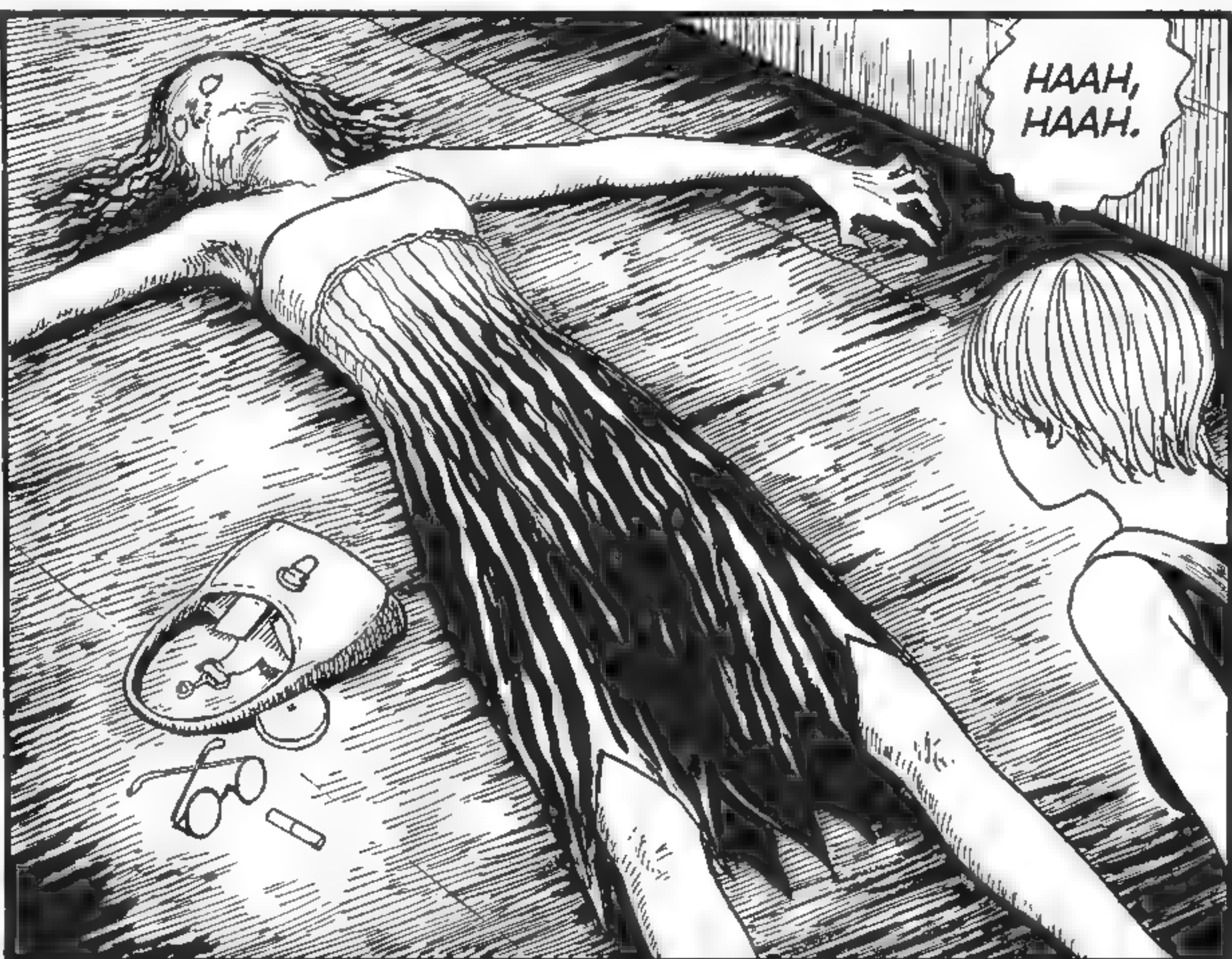
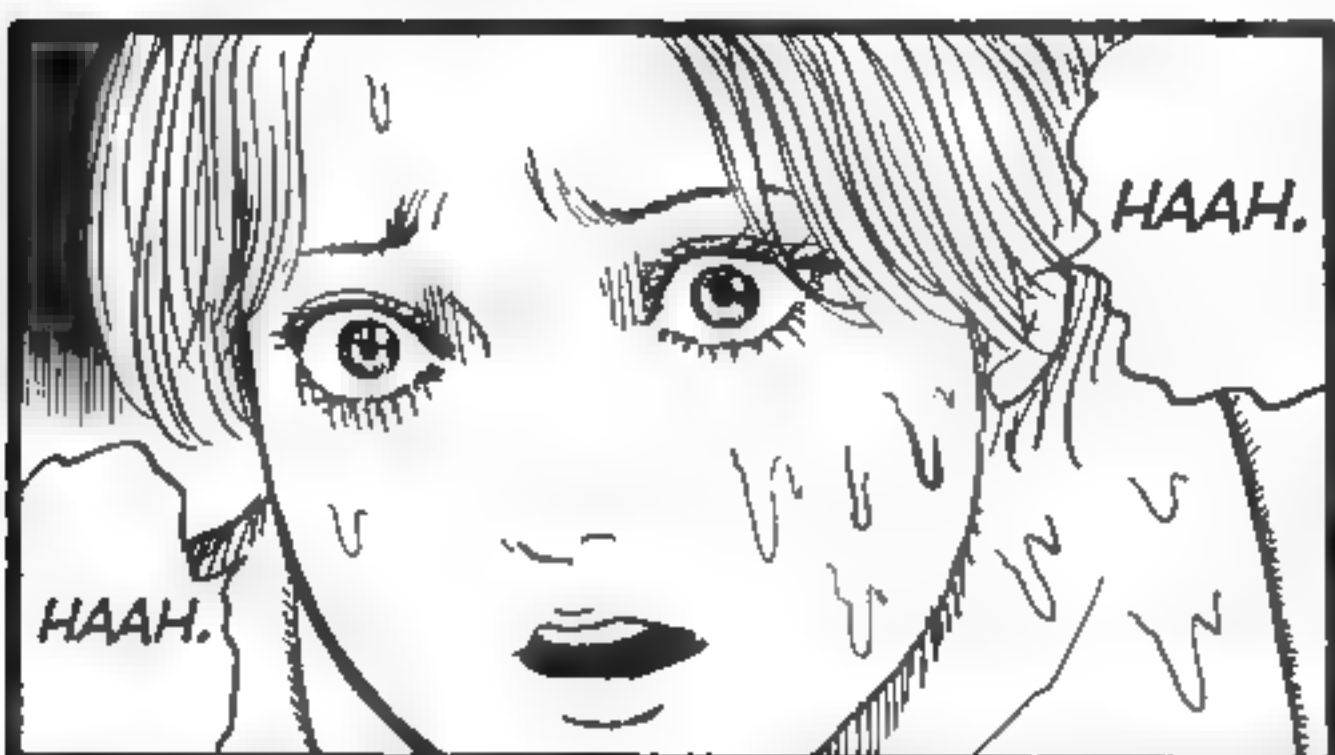
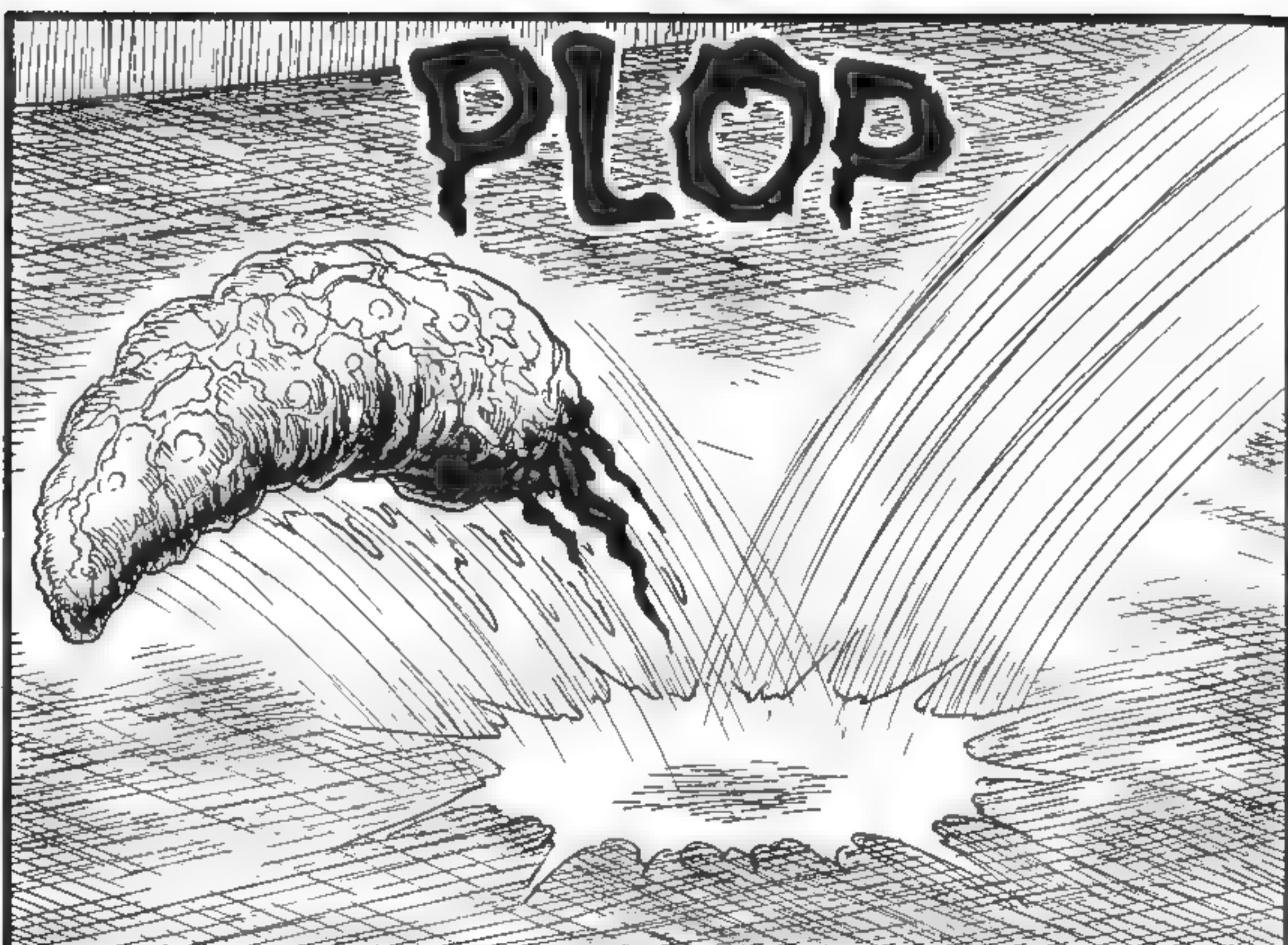
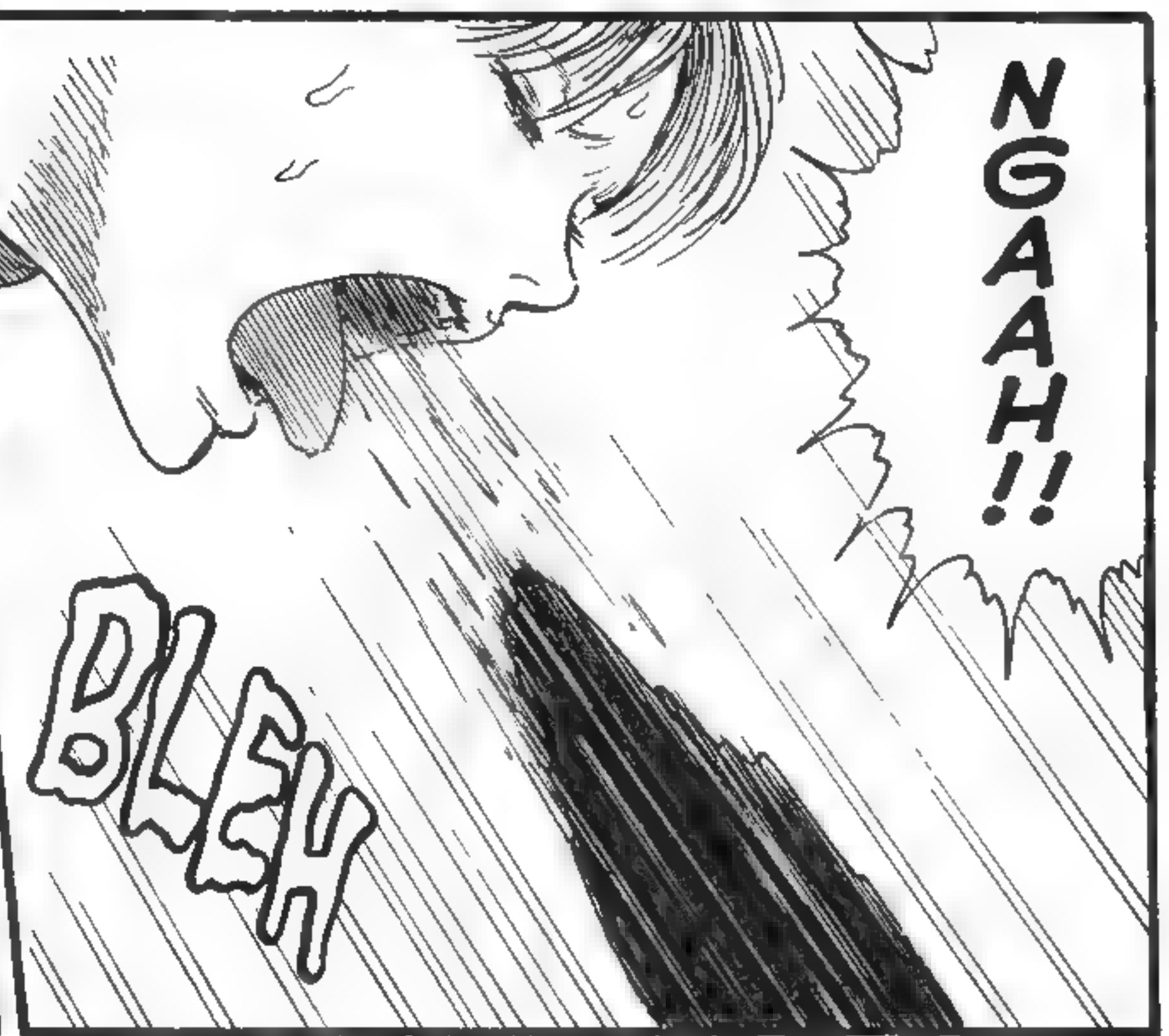
TO JUST RIP YOUR OWN TONGUE OUT LIKE THAT...

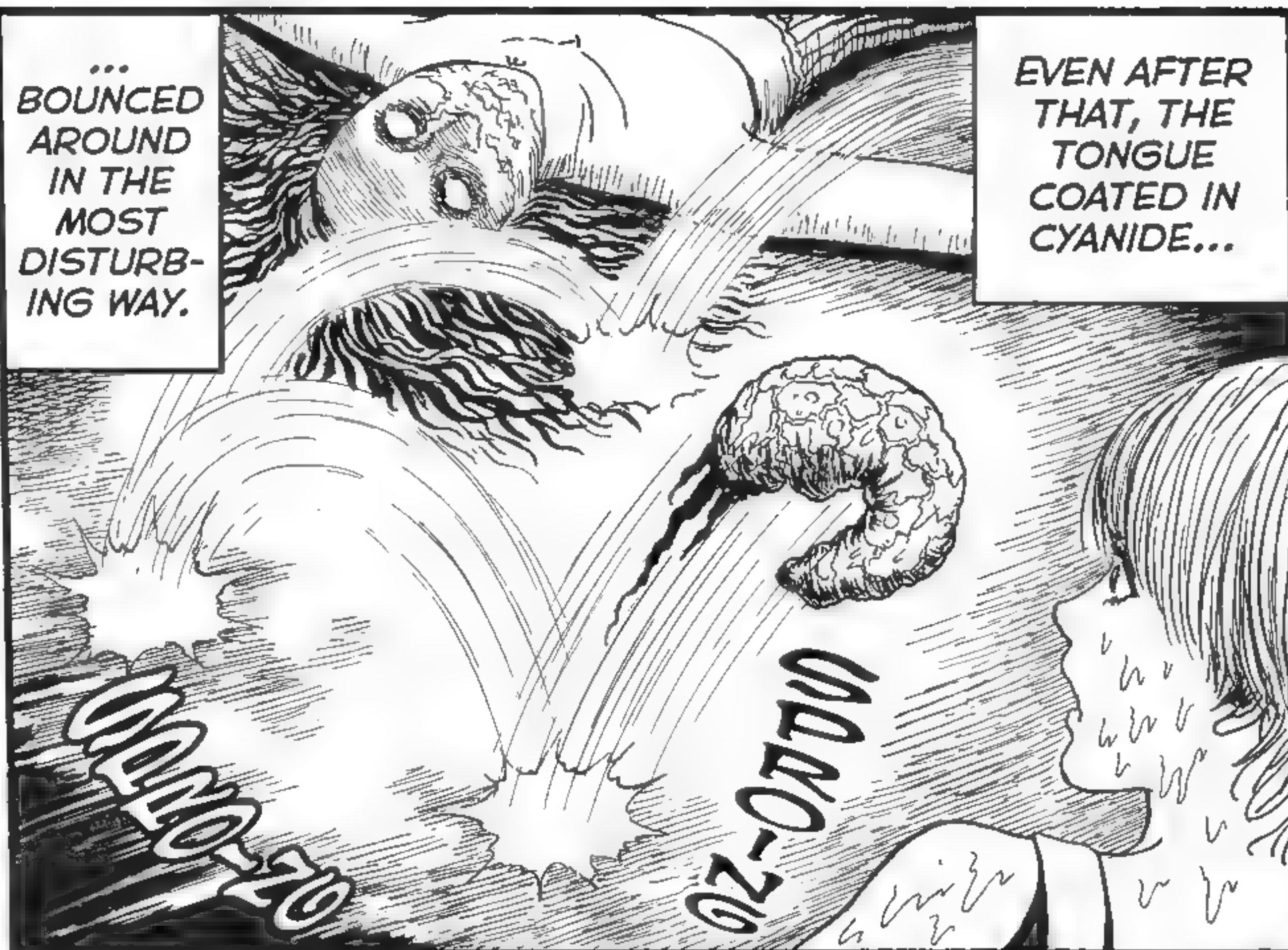
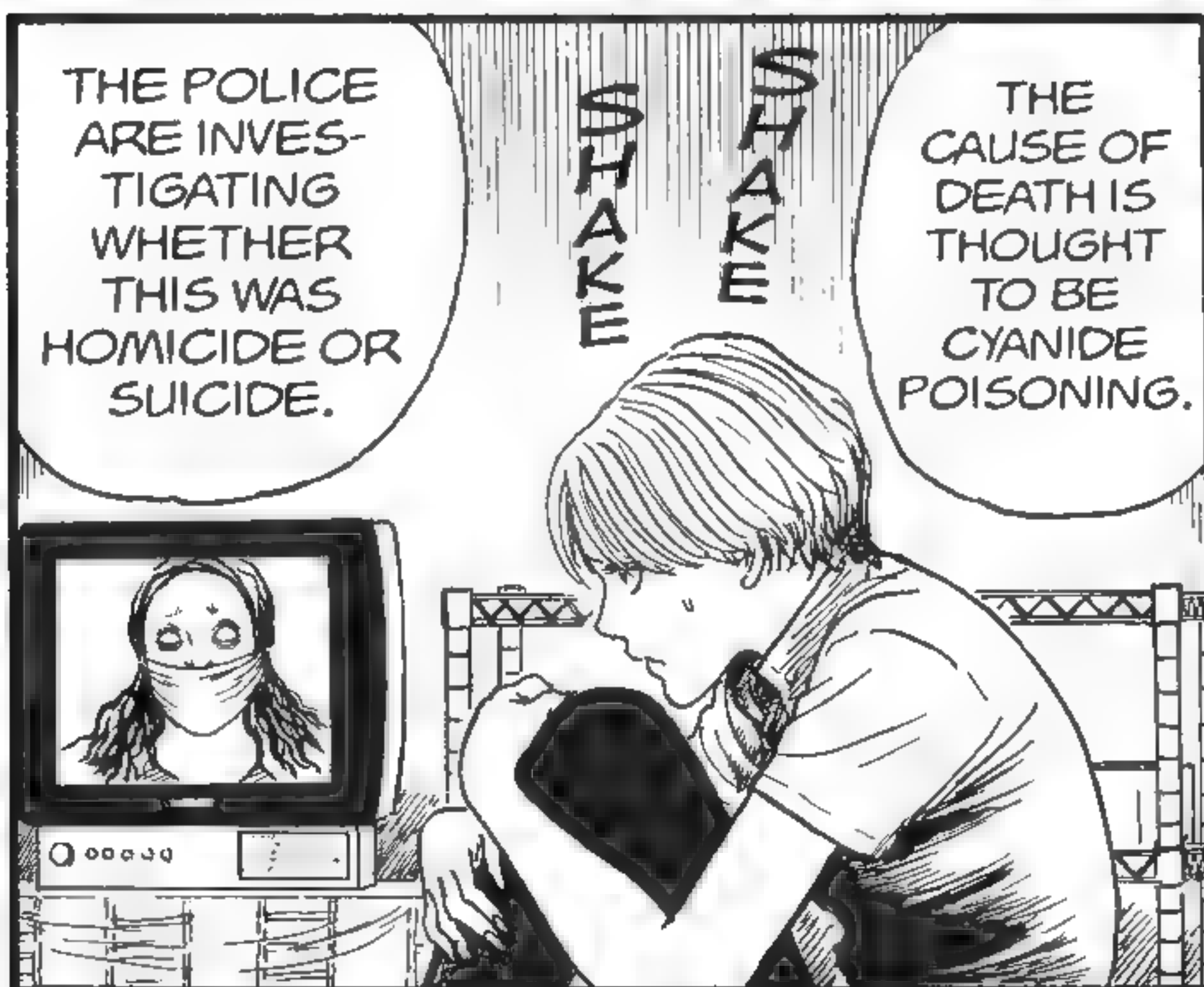
TWITCH TWITCH

...

HAAH HAAH

!

THWP
BOING
HURK HURK
NGAAH!!
BLEH
HURK
HURK
HURK
SPROING
SPROING
HURK
HURK
HURK
GLUG

AAAAAH!

...BOUNCED AROUND IN THE MOST DISTURBING WAY.

EVEN AFTER THAT, THE TONGUE COATED IN CYANIDE...

THE POLICE ARE INVESTIGATING WHETHER THIS WAS HOMICIDE OR SUICIDE.

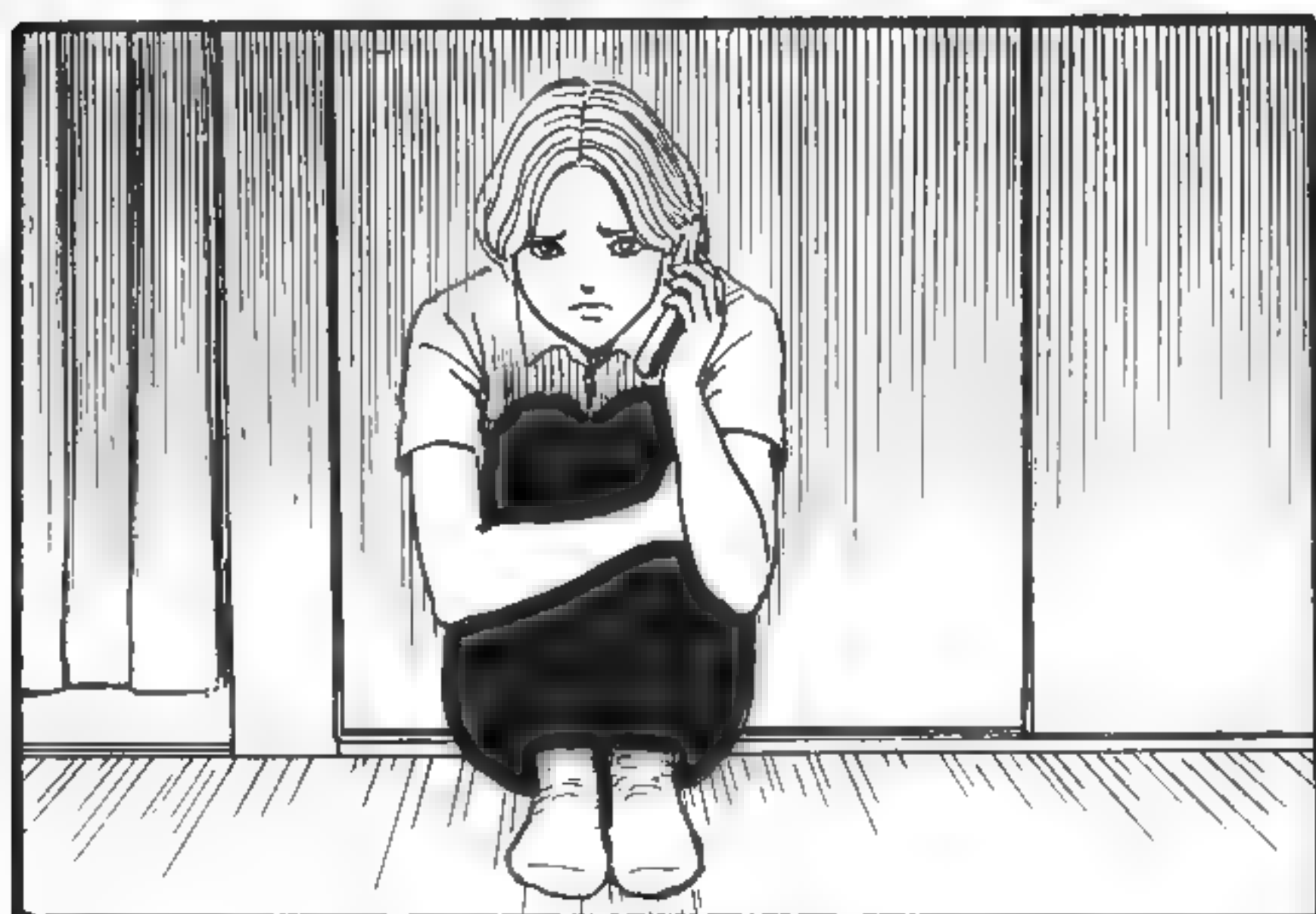
SHAKE

SHAKE

THE CAUSE OF DEATH IS THOUGHT TO BE CYANIDE POISONING.

WE'RE HERE WITH YOUR FIRST NEWS OF THE DAY. AFTER MAKING THE RESIDENTS OF THE CITY OF X LIVE IN FEAR...

...THE LICKING WOMAN WAS FOUND DEAD ON THE ROAD LAST NIGHT.

THAT TONGUE... WHAT HAPPENED TO IT?

THE NEWS DIDN'T MENTION IT AT ALL.

NAGAOKA?

OH!

WHO...
...WAS SHE EXACTLY?
MIKU SEARCHED FOR NAGAOKA, BUT THERE WAS NO TRACE OF HER.
SHE COULD FIND NO CLUES TO PROVE NAGAOKA EVER EXISTED.
THE NUMBER YOU HAVE REACHED IS NOT IN SERVICE.
I WONDER ...THE GLASSES IN THE LICKING WOMAN'S BAG...
THEY LOOKED A LOT LIKE NAGA-OKA'S.
IT—
IT COULDN'T BE.
NO... THAT'S RIDICULOUS?! IF SHE WAS THE LICKING WOMAN, THEN WHY GIVE ME THE CYANIDE?
THAT WOULD BASICALLY BE SUICIDE. THERE'S NO WAY!
...AND THE DAYS PASSED.
MIKU CONTINUED TO BE GRIPPED BY A POWERFUL FEAR...
MIKU'S IMAGINATION AND CHAOTIC MENTAL STATE MAGNIFIED HER TERROR.
IT ALMOST SEEMED AS IF THIS WAS EXACTLY WHAT THE LICKING WOMAN WANTED.

ARE YOU NOT GOOD WITH DOGS?
WHAT?
BARK BARK
BARK BARK
EVENTUALLY, THEY FELL IN LOVE.
YUKIO MADE MIKU FORGET HER MISERABLE PAST.
I...I LIKE DOGS ...
MIKU... I LOVE YOU.
ME, TOO.
?!

HNGRRK

SQUIRM SQUIRM SQUIRM SQUIRM

ZZSH ZZSH

AAAAH !!

GAAH ?!

HNGAAH

M—

MIKU...

HNGAAH!

WHUD
SPROING
SPROING
HRRK ...
NNGH ...
AFTER THEIR BODIES WERE DISCOVERED, POTASSIUM CYANIDE WAS DETECTED IN THEIR BLOOD.
SPROING
SPROING
THE PERSON WHO FOUND THEM TESTIFIED THAT THEY HAD SEEN A GIANT TONGUE JUMPING AROUND BESIDE THE BODIES, BUT THE POLICE IGNORED THIS INFORMATION.

MASTER UMEZZ AND ME

I have two older sisters.

Both of them loved scary manga.

Yoko

Akiko

One of the books they had was...

...Kazuo Umezz's *Sister Mummy.*

BIZARRE COMICS KAZUO UMEZZ

SISTER MUMMY

MIRRA SENSEI

I read it and was immedi-ately enthralled.

A beautiful missionary school nun is sacrificed to a mummy...

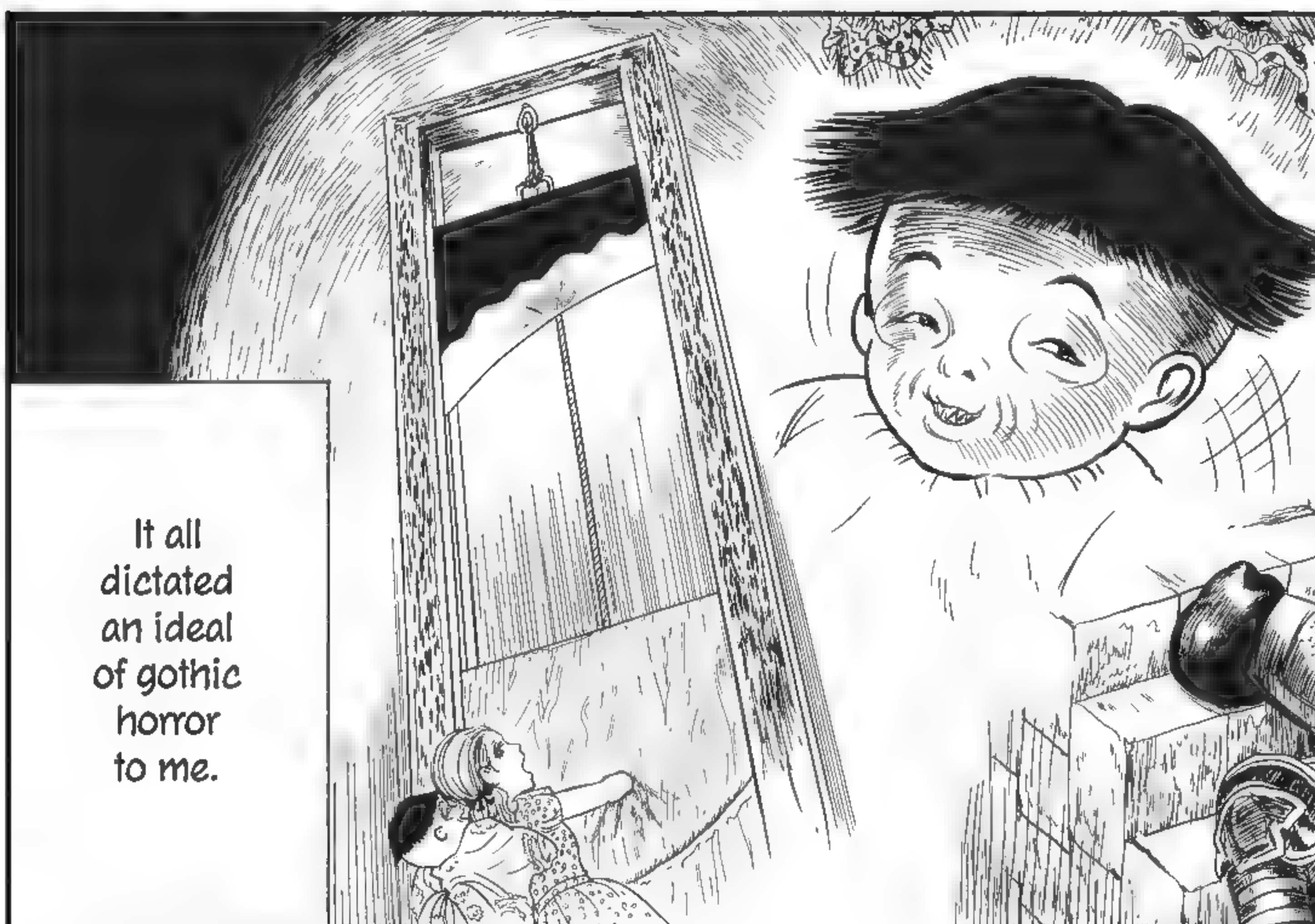
...which attacks the lovely heroines. It was strange to read, even sexual somehow.

AAAAH

After that, for my birthday, my kind-hearted sisters got me....

...the book *The Cursed Mansion* (from *The Baby Girl*).

BIZARRE COMICS KAZUO UMEZZ
THE CURSED MANSION

The unsettling figure of Tamami, the basement of the Western building, the guillotine, the helmet and armor...

It all dictated an ideal of gothic horror to me.

I decided to go buy a book myself with my allowance at the only bookstore in our small town.

The first volume of *Orochi*.

WEEKLY SHONEN SUNDAY

WEEKLY POST

I enjoyed the power of the art, but it wasn't until I was a little more grown-up that I understood the depth of the story.

One day in grade three or four, my friend Ueda said...

JUN, THERE'S THIS AMAZING MANGA BY KAZUO UMEZZ IN *SHONEN SUNDAY*.

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

THIS KINDA SHRIMP MONSTER CHOWS DOWN ON KIDS.

WHAT.

BOOKS

I didn't usually read the magazines because I preferred the books, so I went without this manga for a long time.

SUNDAY

MAGAZINE

When I finally stood and read *Sunday* at the bookstore, the bit about the shrimp monster had already ended.

Instead, a battle between students unfolded inside a smoky classroom.

WAAH!

WAAH!

GAAH!

DAMMIT!

THE AIR'S NO GOOD!

I CAN'T BREATHE!

W-WHAT IS THIS MANGA ...?

I still had only seen a tiny part of *The Drifting Classroom*.

SUNDAY

WEEKLY SHONEN SU

However...

OOH, THANKS.

HERE.

ALREADY NOTHING CUTE ABOUT ME

And the days passed. I finally got the book as a birthday present from my kind-hearted sister in sixth grade.

BUT I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH ALLOWANCE!

I WANNA READ IT ALL AT ONCE IN THE BOOK!

UNNNH. I GUESS. MAKES SENSE.

THAT'S ALL THEY HAD. WE LIVE IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE, AFTER ALL.

IT'S THE *LAST* BOOK!!

TH- THIS IS VOLUME ELEVEN...

It was a long time before I managed to get ahold of all the books. And I was reluctant to say goodbye after I'd read them all, so I drew about ten pages on unlined report paper under the title *The Drifting Classroom volume 12*, but for some reason, it ended up being a total gag manga.

WHO'S THIS OLD GUY?!

I CAN TELL IT'S TOTALLY AMAZING HOW THEY'RE RECONCILING HERE.

DYNAMITE?!

I started reading *The Drifting Classroom* from the last volume. After being sent to the future, the children were already starving and half out of their minds as they headed like a surging wave towards the emotional big finish!

THE DRIFTING CLASSROOM VOLUME 12

CHILDREN MUST PLAY CHILDREN'S GAMES!

Incidentally, if my memory's correct, the first time I saw Master Umezz in motion...

KOHAKU TEN BEST SONGS

...was on the TV show *Kohaku Ten Best Songs*!

Makoto-chan was a big hit at the time...

BICHIGUSO ROCK DE ICHI NICHI!!

It goes without saying that my sisters set a tape recorder in front of the TV and recorded it.

...and Master Umezz gave a passionate rendition of "Bichiguso Rock" in costume as Ranmaru!!

...KYO MO BICHIBICHIIIIIII!!

THAT'S THE *REAL* KAZUO UMEZZZZ!

SO EXCITIIIIIING!!

Naturally, I loved *Makoto-chan*, too.

When I got appendicitis and peritonitis at the same time over the summer of ninth grade and I was in the hospital for a month...

...someone (maybe my kindhearted sisters) brought me volume eight of *Makoto-chan*.

MAKOTO-CHAN

KAZUO UMEZZ 8

It made me laugh so hard, even though I had a drain in my stomach.

OWWWWWWW!!

It's still a good memory even now.

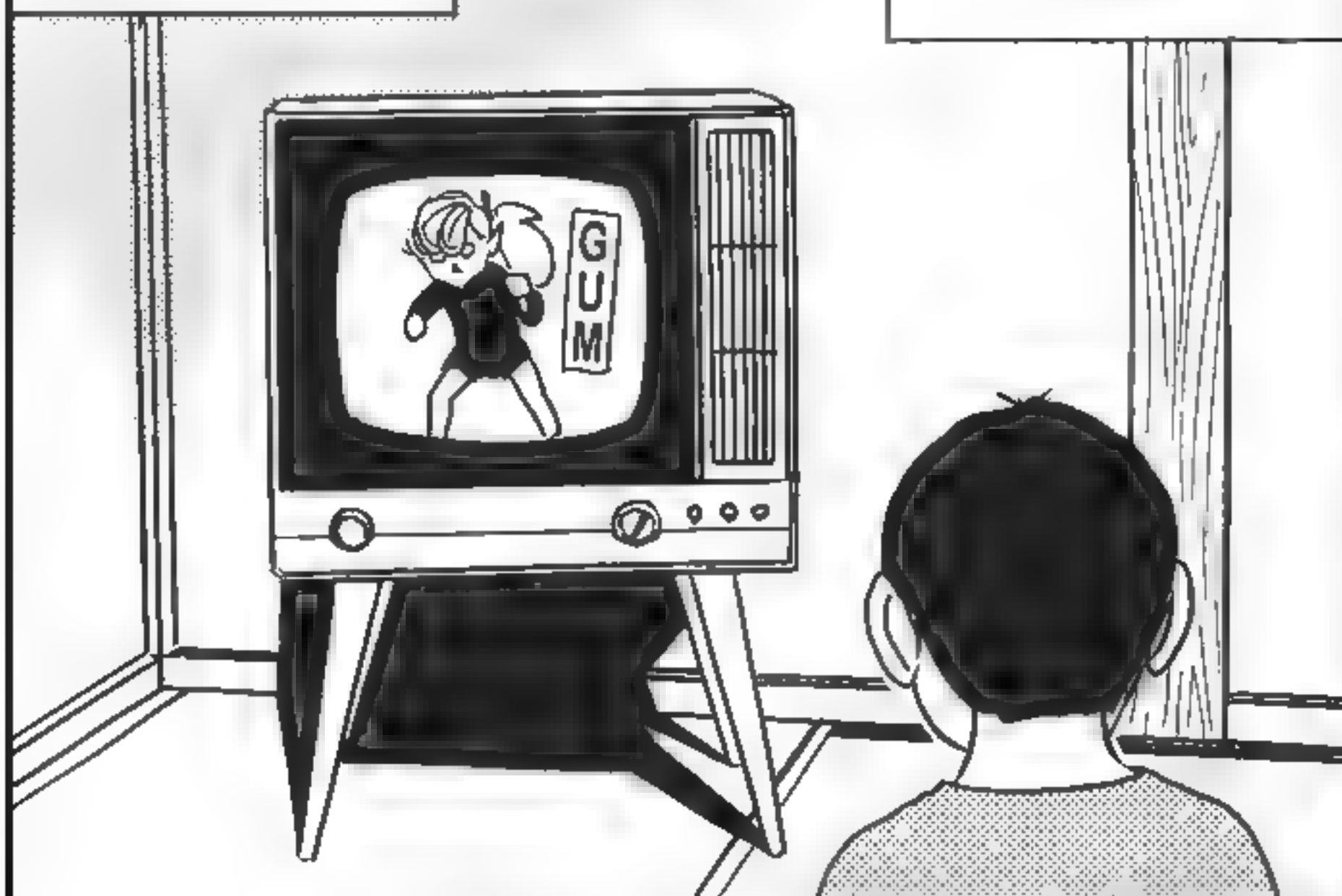
You could simply enjoy *Makoto-chan* as a gag manga, but for me, it was a scathing critique of humanity.

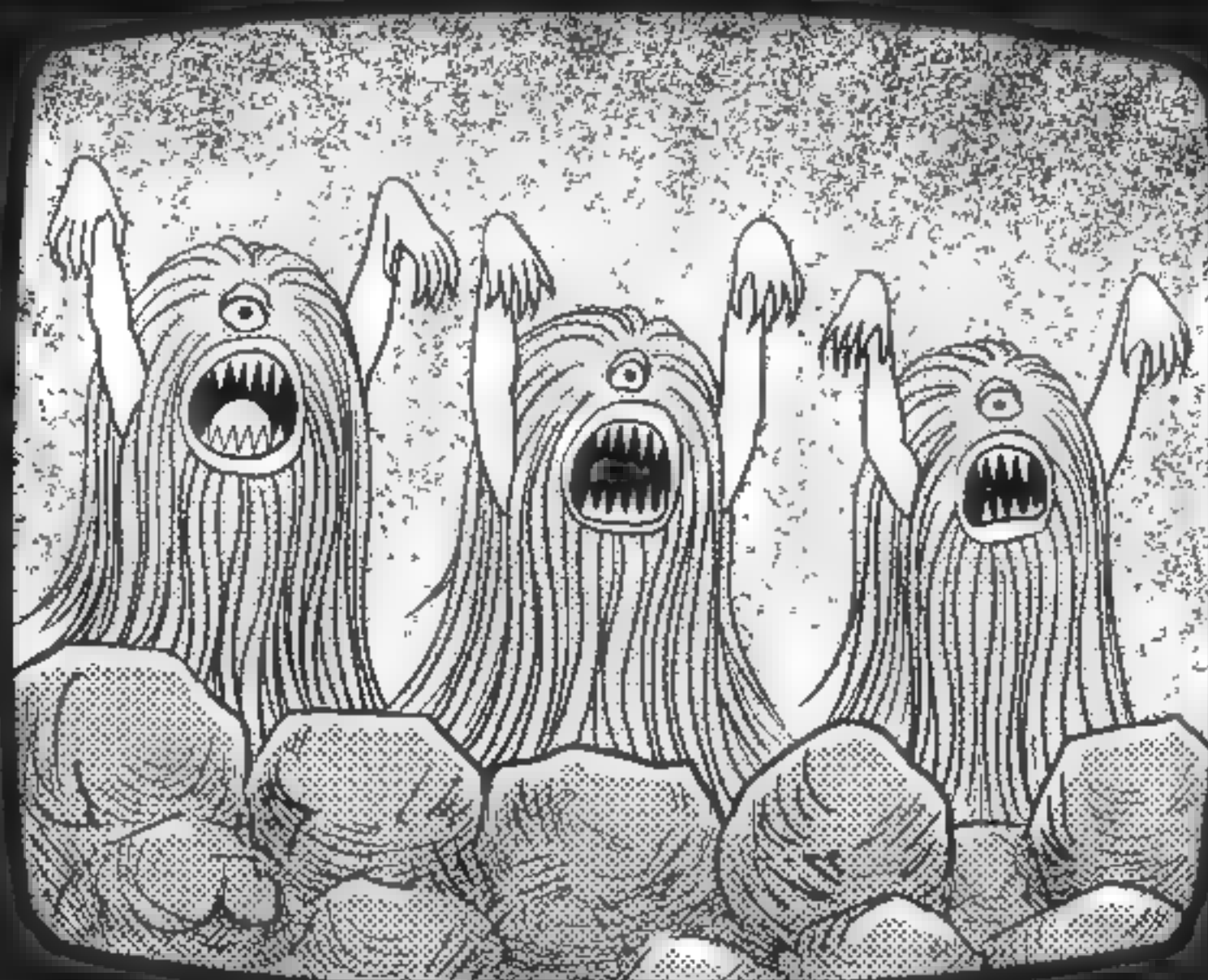
HANDLE WITH CARE

KAWHAM!

I greatly admired Kazuo Umezz for not stopping at mere jokes, although I expected nothing less of him.

I think it was for chewing gum.

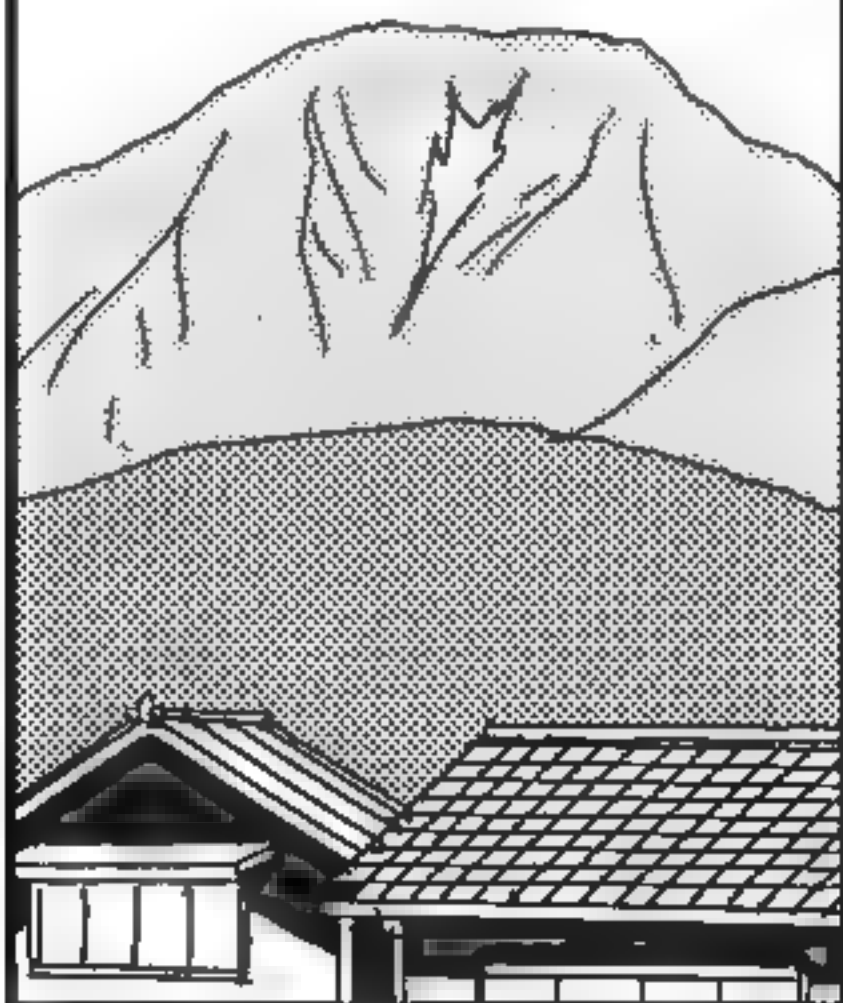
I'd only ever seen the character on a TV commercial when I was little.

By the way, I didn't know that *Cat Eyed Boy* was one of Master Umezz's works until I was in junior high.

The series hadn't been turned into a TV anime back then, so I wondered just who the characters were.

I remember it was animated. The characters later known as Cat Eyed Boy and Tsunami Summoners made an appearance.

I think I found out it was Kazuo Umezz's *Cat Eyed Boy* because it was on Tokyo Channel 12 (now TV Tokyo) when I was in junior high.

Gifu TV broadcast a lot of Tokyo Channel 12 programs, and I spent day after day scouring the TV listings.

AAAAAH! I WANT TO WATCH IT! I HAVE TO!! THEY'RE NOT SHOWING IT ON GIFU TV?!

But no matter how much time went by, they didn't broadcast *Cat Eyed Boy.*

WHEN ARE THEY GOING TO SHOW IT?!

And then one day...

My sister was wild with excitement in the living room.

JUN! I GOT GOOD NEWS!

HUH? WHAT?

THEY'RE GONNA SHOW *CAT EYED BOY!!*

WHAAAAT?!

GIFU TV, YEAH?! WHEN?!

YOU GOTTA TELL ME!!

IT'S WRITTEN DOWN ON THIS PAPER.

GO ON AN' CHECK IT OUT!

LEMME SEE THAT!

SNATCH

FWWM

FWWM

HM?

GOTCHA!

This was at the time a popular game in my kindhearted sister's class, apparently.

In the end, it wasn't until I was an adult that I got to watch *Ghost Story: Cat Eyed Boy.*

When I was in high school, Asahi Sonorama put out the series *Kazuo Umezz Scary Books.*

KAZUO UMEZZ SCARY BOOKS

They were large hardcover books, and in them I encountered many works I hadn't read before.

Discovering so many astounding stories with such a high artistic level like "Grave of the Butterfly" and "Fear"...

...made me realize all over again Master Umezz's genius.

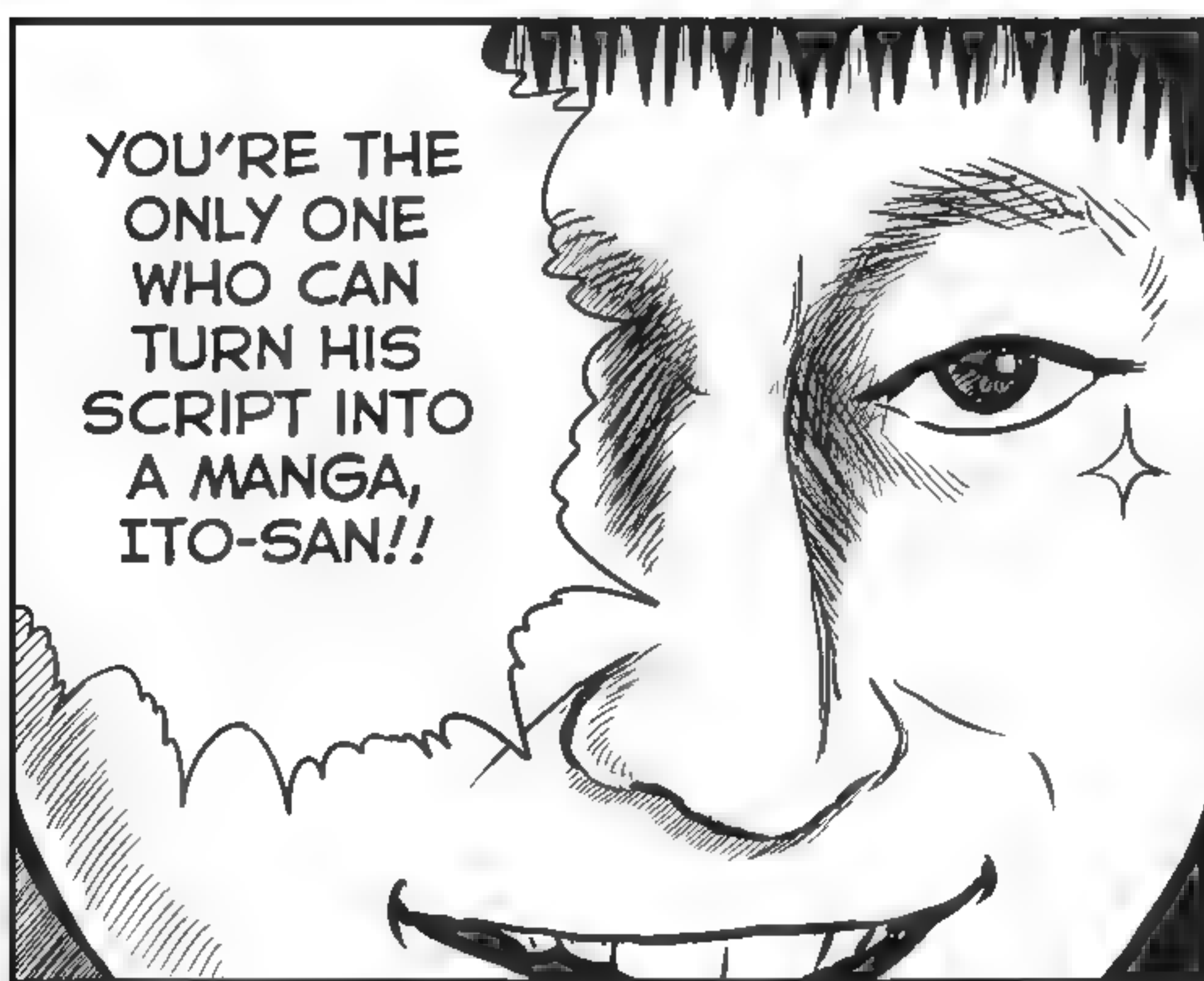
I could never exhaustively list all my memories of Master Umezz's works, but I only have limited pages here, so I will have to jump ahead to more recent times.

I was meeting with my editor at *Spirits*.

ITO-SAN, THE TRUTH IS, MASTER UMEZZ IS MAKING A MOVIE.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADAPT THE STORY OF THE FILM INTO A MANGA TO BE RELEASED AS A BOOK WHEN IT COMES OUT?

WHAAAT?!

Y-YOU MEAN YOU WANT ME TO ADAPT MASTER UMEZZ'S FILM INTO A MANGA?

THAT'S EXACTLY IT!!

YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN TURN HIS SCRIPT INTO A MANGA, ITO-SAN!!

UNNH...

TH-THIS IS INCREDIBLE.
ARE YOU SURE I'M THE RIGHT PERSON?
I SAY THAT...
...BUT I WANT TO DO IT...
IT WOULD BE AN INCREDIBLE HONOR.
AAH, BUT I'M ALREADY WORKING ON OTHER SERIES BEFORE THE FILM COMES OUT.
IT WOULD BE TOUGH.
WELL, I'LL SEND YOU THE SCRIPT LATER, SO PLEASE THINK ABOUT IT.
UNDERSTOOD.
And then the script arrived.
EXPRESS
Mr. Junji Ito
SPIRITS
RIP

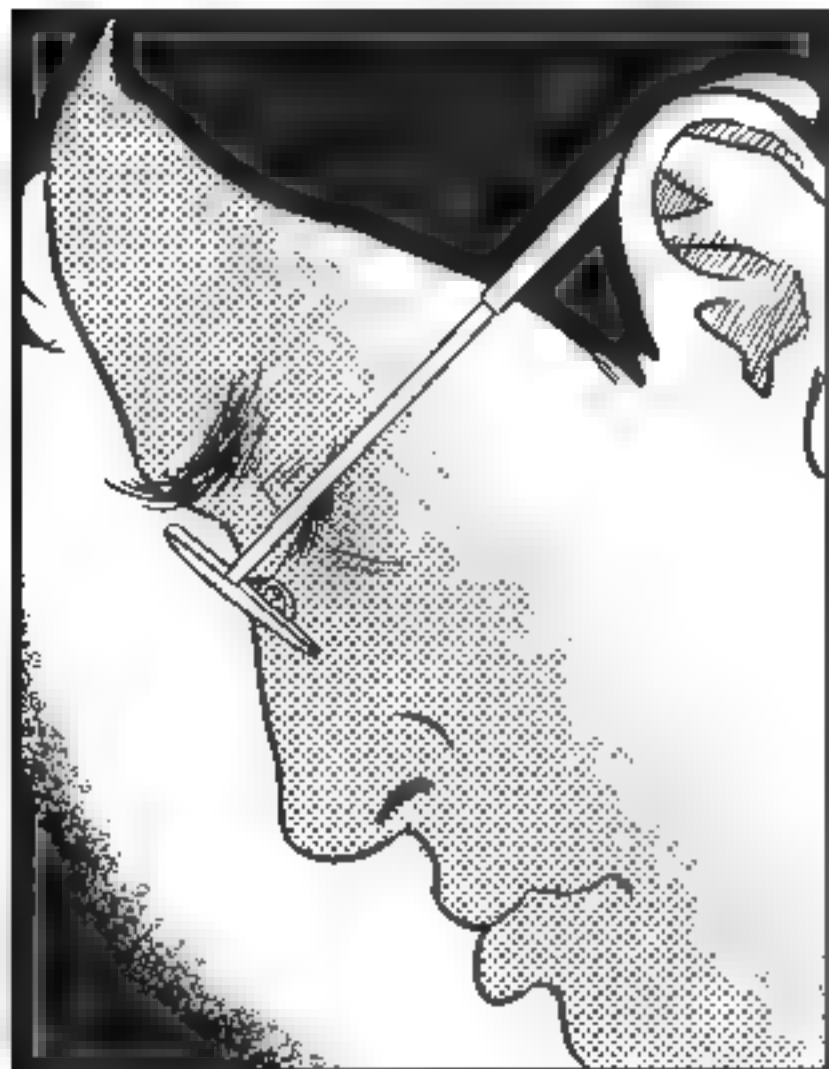
Mother (working title)
Draft No. 4

Main Characters
Kazuo Umezz:
Protagonist. Manga artist
Ichie Umezz:
Kazuo Umezz's mother
Kimio Umezz:
Kazuo Umezz's father

MOTHER ...

PROTAGONIST, KAZUO UMEZZ!!

It was a frightening and sad story about Master Umezz and his mother.

At the same time, it overturned stereotypes. I was blown away!

I started imagining what it would be like if it was drawn in picture form.

FIRST, THE HERO KAZUO UMEZZ...

...WOULD BE LIKE THIS!

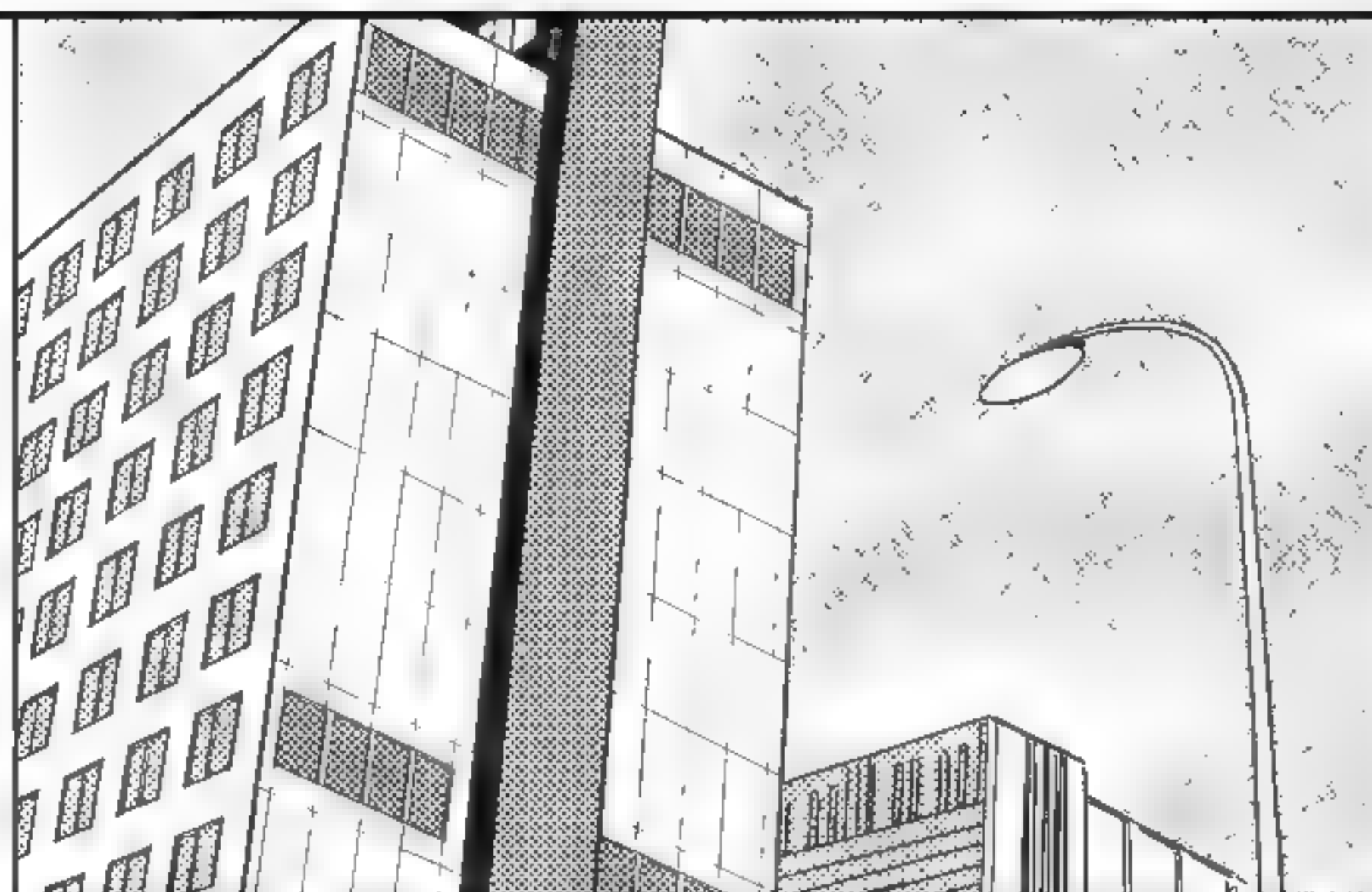
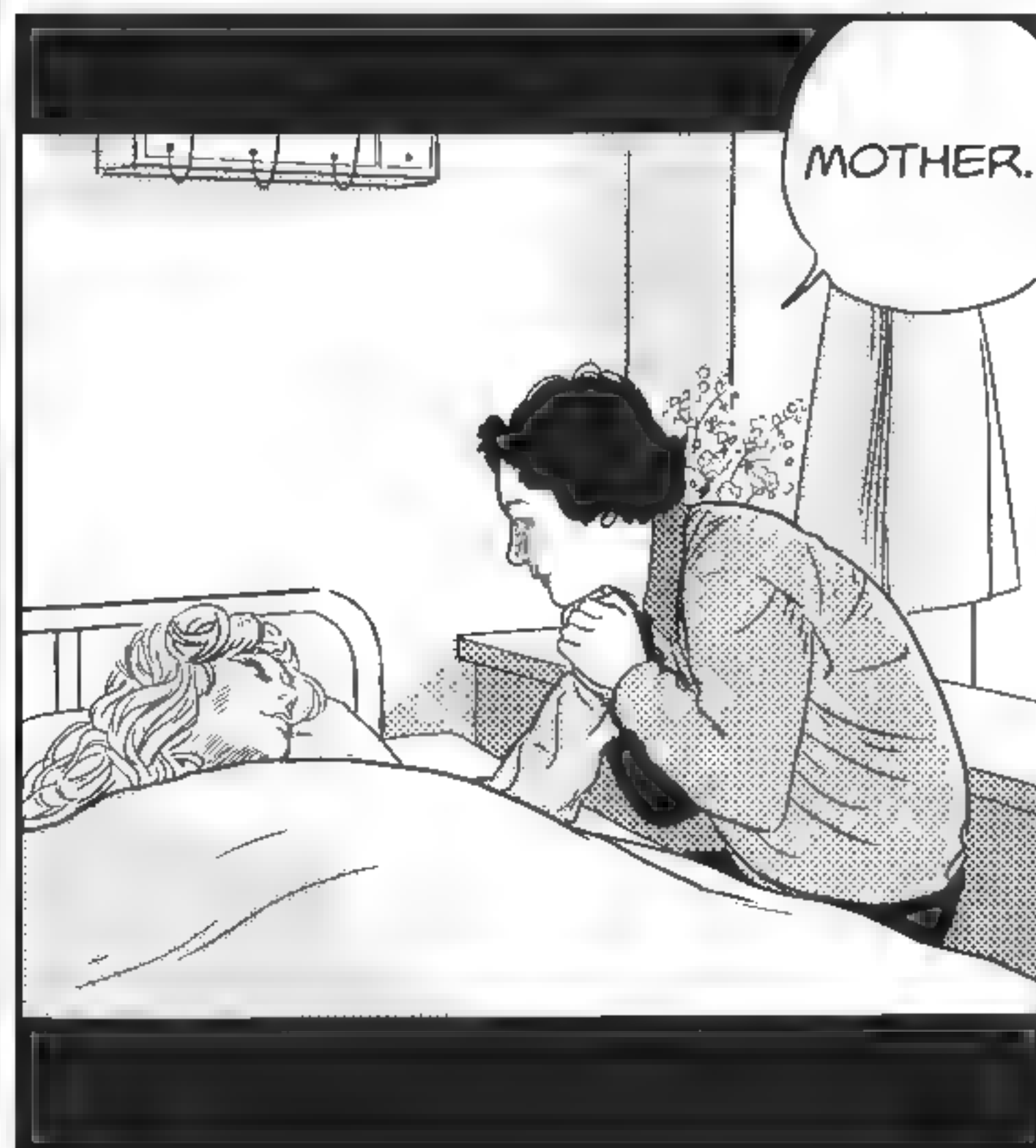
GWAEH

AND THEN HIS MOTHER... RIGHT. I'M SURE I SAW A PICTURE OF MASTER UMEZZ AND HIS MOTHER IN A BOOK SOMEWHERE. I'LL HAVE TO LOOK FOR IT THE NEXT TIME I'M HOME.

AND THE KEY TO IT ALL, THE MONSTER... I'D WANT TO MAKE THIS IN THE STYLE OF UMEZZ!

LIKE THIS MAYBE.

I WANT YOUUUUUU!

And then at last Kazuo Umezz's first work as a director, *Mother,* was complete!! I headed to the screening on June 20.

In the end, I had to abandon the idea of adapting the movie since my own schedule wouldn't allow it.

Mother

マザー

MOTHER.

KRRRR

WHAM

I WAS COM-PLETELY WRONG.

MASTER UMEZZ'S MONSTER SHONE, EERIE AND BEAUTIFUL.

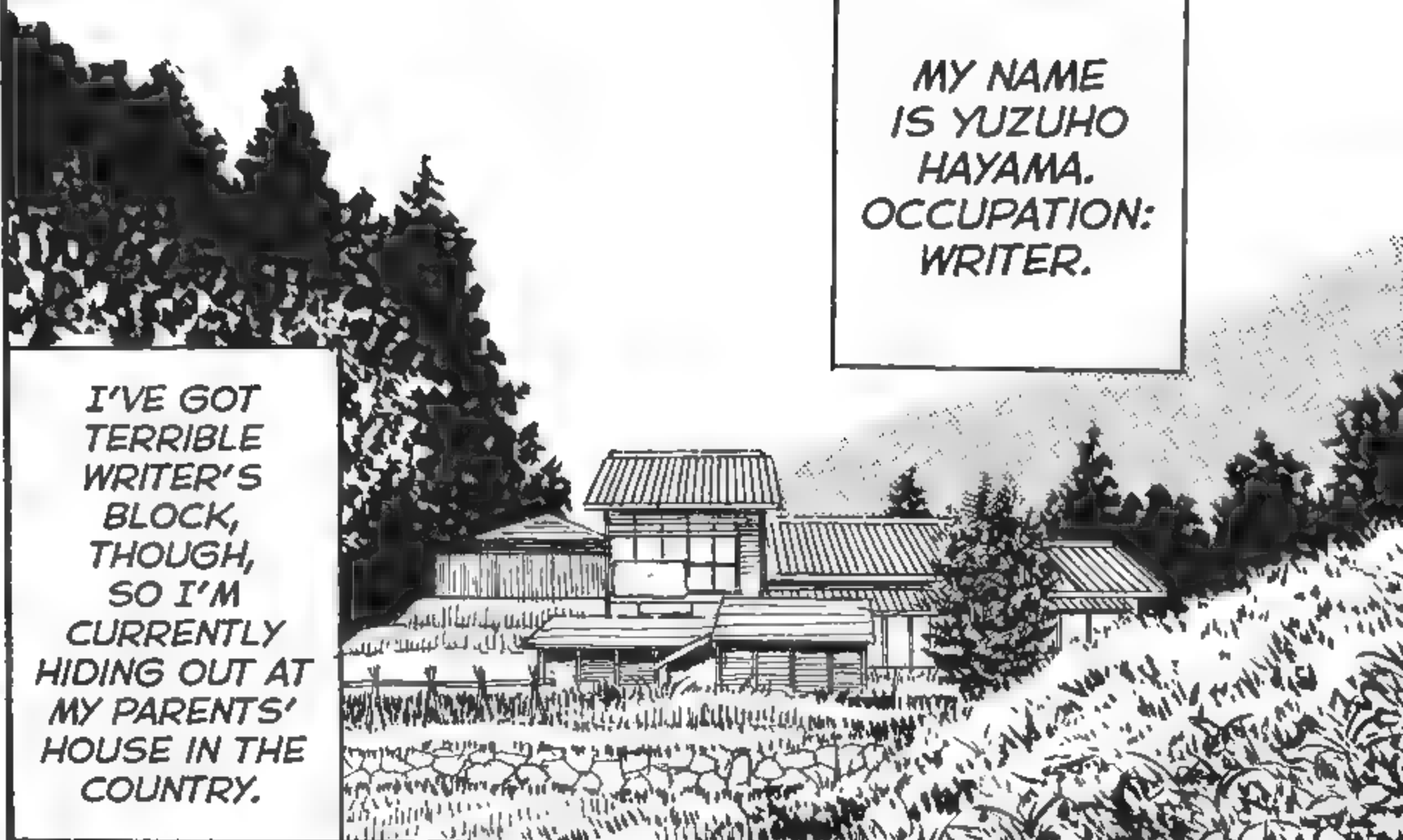
I-I'M SO GLAD I DIDN'T...

...MAKE THE MANGAAAAA!

As a fan, I'm eagerly awaiting new manga work, but I also can't wait to see what Master Kazuo Umezz does now that he's also got the medium of movies to work with!

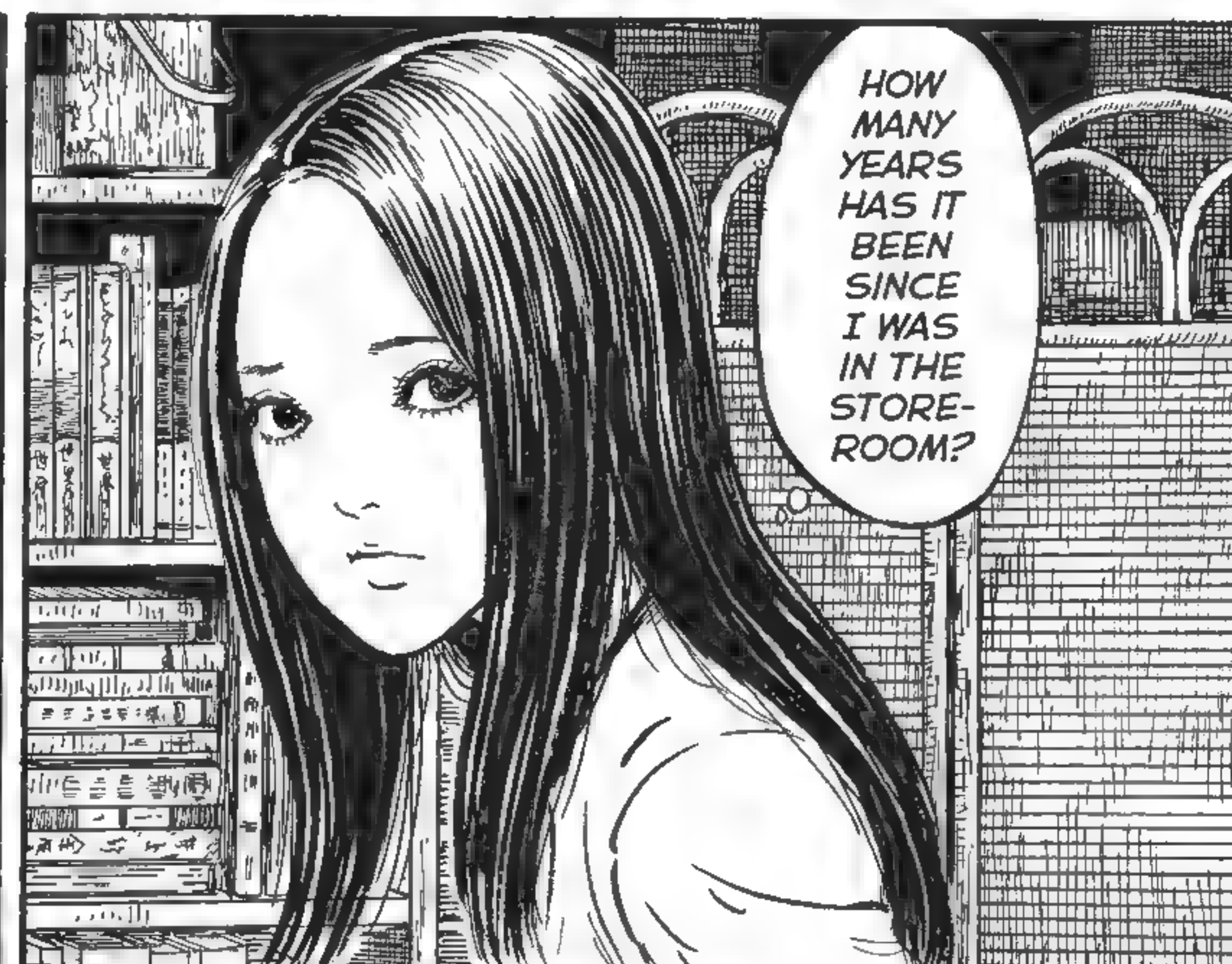
I ended up visiting the Umezz home after that for this project! I never even dreamed I would have an opportunity like this!

HOW LOVE CAME TO PROFESSOR KIRIDA

BASED ON THE STORY "HOW LOVE COME TO PROFESSOR GUILDEA" BY ROBERT HICHENS

MY NAME IS YUZUHO HAYAMA. OCCUPATION: WRITER.

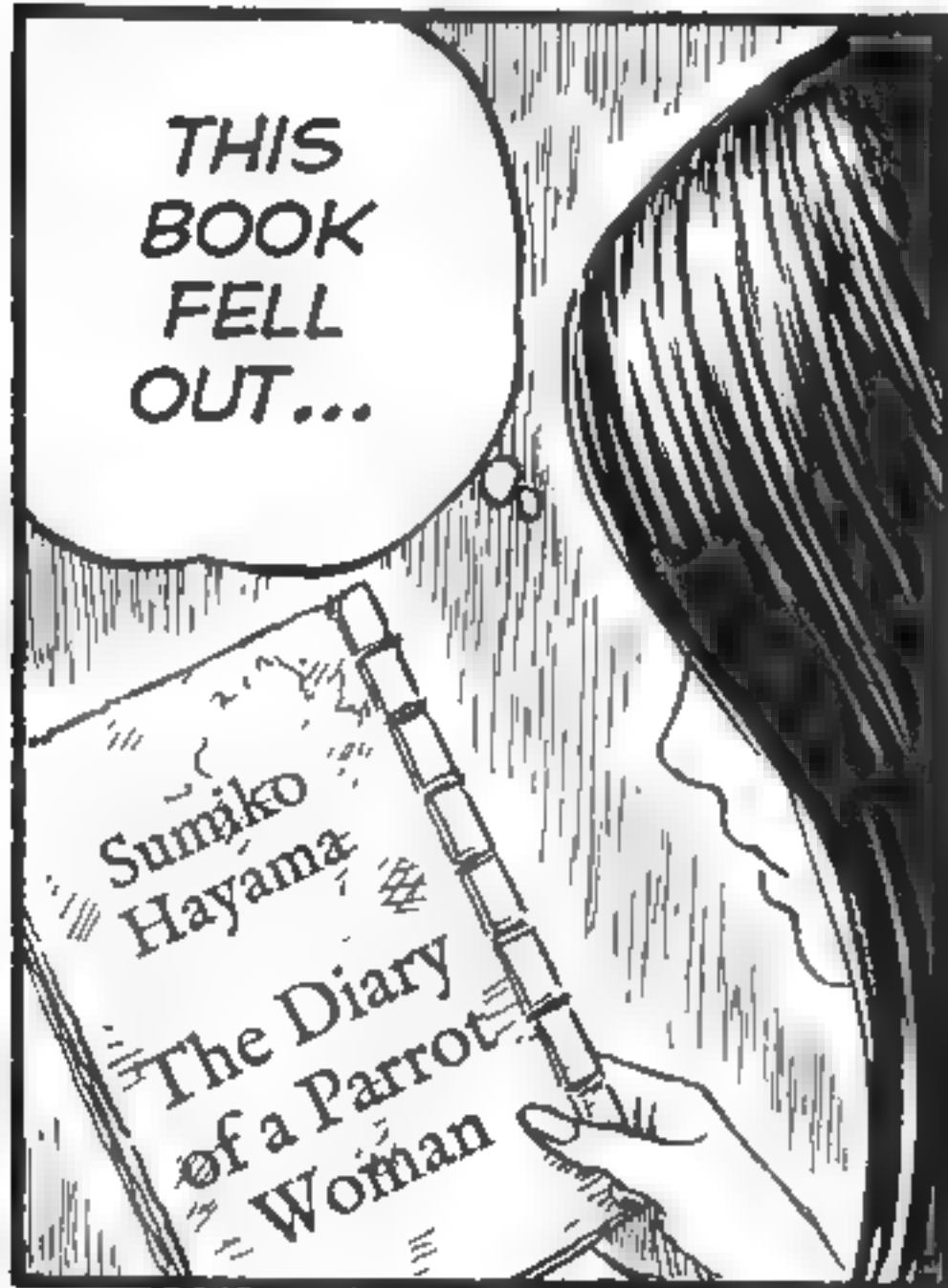
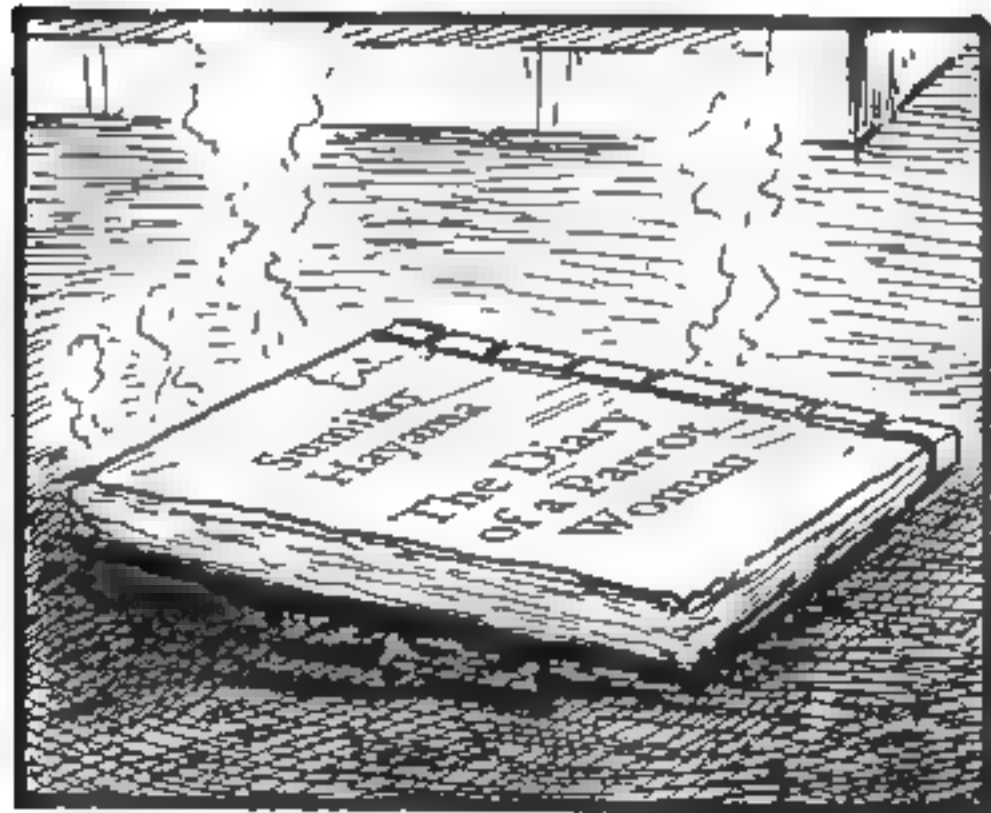
I'VE GOT TERRIBLE WRITER'S BLOCK, THOUGH, SO I'M CURRENTLY HIDING OUT AT MY PARENTS' HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY.

SO MANY OLD BOOKS...

HASN'T CHANGED AT ALL.

HOW MANY YEARS HAS IT BEEN SINCE I WAS IN THE STORE-ROOM?

Sumiko Hayama
The Diary of a Parrot Woman

KLAK

JUMP

THIS BOOK FELL OUT...

Sumiko Hayama
The Diary of a Parrot Woman

WHO'S THERE ?!

"THE DIARY... OF A PARROT WOMAN"...

A JOURNAL ?

Sumiko Hayama
The Diary of a Parrot Woman

SUMIKO HAYAMA? NOW WHO'S THAT? ONE OF OUR ANCESTORS MAYBE.

MOM, THIS SUMIKO HAYAMA PERSON WANTED TO BE A WRITER IN TOKYO.

HMM. SO SHE IS A RELATIVE THEN.

LOOK!

SHE WROTE ABOUT HAVING "STUDIED UNDER PROFESSOR KIRIDA AT XX UNIVERSITY"!

PROFESSOR KIRIDA! THAT'S ENGAI KIRIDA!! THIS WOMAN MET ENGAI KIRIDA! AMAZING!

WOW... ENGAI KIRIDA? THE SAME ENGAI KIRIDA OF THAT PRIZE YOU WON?

ENGAI KIRIDA.

HE WAS A SCHOLAR OF JAPANESE LITERATURE AND A LITERARY AUTHOR IN THE MEIJI ERA.

HIS LITERARY STYLE WAS AESTHETIC AND REFINED, MAKING HIM A UNIQUE PRESENCE IN THE HISTORY OF LITERATURE.

KIRIDA WAS KNOWN TO BE AN EXTREME MISANTHROPE AND REMAINED SINGLE HIS ENTIRE LIFE UNTIL HIS MYSTERIOUS DEATH AT THE AGE OF 57.

SURPRISINGLY, THIS JOURNAL CONTAINED A RECORD OF THE PERIOD LEADING UP TO THAT DEATH. WHAT FOLLOWS ARE EXTRACTS FROM THE ENTRIES PERTAINING TO KIRIDA.

TOKYO...
THE TIME WAS THE LATE MEIJI ERA.
WELCOME. THE MASTER IS WAITING FOR YOU INSIDE.
APOLOGIES FOR HAVING YOU COME ALL THE WAY HERE. I NEED TO LEARN ABOUT CHRISTIANITY FOR THE NOVEL I'M WRITING.
SO YOU'RE FATHER MURCHISON?

HMPH. I COULD SIMPLY REFERENCE SOME BOOKS.
IF POSSIBLE, I'D RATHER NOT BE INDEBTED TO OTHERS.
I'M QUITE HONORED TO BE ABLE TO ASSIST YOU, PROFESSOR KIRIDA.
PLEASE, ASK ME ANYTHING ABOUT THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST.
FATHER MURCHISON. IS IT TRUE THAT CHRISTIANITY IS A RELIGION OF LOVE?
YES, THAT'S EXACTLY RIGHT.
OUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN BY THE LOVE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.
HMPH. LOVE, HM? I'M THE SORT THAT'S DISGUSTED BY THIS "LOVE," YOU SEE.
WHEN I SENSE THAT I AM THE LEAST BIT LOVED BY ANOTHER, IT SICKENS ME. I CAN'T STAND IT.
AT SUCH TIMES, I AM FILLED WITH THE DESIRE TO RETURN THIS LOVE WITH EXTREME CRUELTY.
FOR MYSELF, THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS LOVE IN THIS WORLD. EMOTIONAL LOVE, INDEED. PHYSICAL LOVE, IT'S THE HEIGHT OF FOOLISHNESS.
ALL THAT NEED EXIST IN THIS WORLD IS A SUBLIME BEAUTY.

THIS GRAY BIRD? NO NEED FOR FLATTERY.
HMPH.
THAT PARROT IS EXTREMELY BEAUTIFUL!
BUT THIS FELLOW DOES AN EXCELLENT IMITATION OF HUMAN BEINGS.
OH... BEAUTY? THAT IS INDEED A WONDERFUL THING.
AND NOT SIMPLY SOME SUPERFICIAL MIMICRY. HE ACTUALLY STUDIES HIS TARGET QUITE PASSIONATELY BEFORE BEGINNING.
IT'S ONLY AFTER HE'S COMPLETED HIS STUDY THAT HE COMMENCES HIS IMPRESSION. IT'S ALMOST AS THOUGH HIS SUBJECT POSSESSES HIM. I APPRECIATE HIS PASSION FOR RESEARCH.
...
HAYAMA!!
YOU STILL CAN'T WRITE ANYTHING BUT THESE LUKEWARM TALES?!
COME BACK WHEN YOU WON'T DISGRACE YOURSELF!
?!

THERE'S THIS DREADFUL WOMAN STUDENT AT MY UNIVERSITY.
SHE WISHES TO BE A WRITER WITH THE PASSION THAT ONLY *THAT* SORT CAN MUSTER. SHE COMES TO ME WITH THESE TERRIBLE STORIES.
EACH TIME, I TELL HER MY HONEST OPINION.
THE PARROT HAS QUITE THOROUGHLY MEMORIZED THOSE CONVERSATIONS.
SHE'S ACTUALLY COME AGAIN FAITHFULLY TODAY.
I'M HAVING HER WAIT OUTSIDE UNTIL YOU AND I ARE FINISHED.
FATHER MURCHISON, YOU TOLD ME MANY THINGS TODAY WHICH WILL BE USEFUL.
HOWEVER, THERE'S STILL MORE I WOULD HEAR. WILL YOU COME AGAIN, PERHAPS?
YES, GLADLY.
PROFESSOR!
DID YOU READ THE MANUSCRIPT I BROUGHT YESTERDAY?

HAYAMA? YOU'RE STILL HERE? ...YES, I READ IT.

YOUR WRITING IS NOTHING MORE THAN COMMON FIRST-PERSON NARRATIVE!

QUIT THIS NONSENSE AND STOP ROBBING ME OF MY PRECIOUS TIME.

MISS HAYAMA, PLEASE CHEER UP.

WHERE DO YOU LIVE? I SHALL SEE YOU HOME.

I... I RESPECT PROFES-SOR KIRIDA FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART.

IT'S TRUE HE'S A MISAN-THROPE, AND THERE ARE PLENTY OF PEOPLE WHO HATE HIM. BUT...

I TRULY DO LIKE HIM AND THE BEAUTIFUL WORK HE CREATES.

I WANT TO WRITE BEAUTIFUL, LOFTY NOVELS LIKE HIS.

AND THEN... MORE THAN ANYTHING, I WANT HIM TO APPROVE OF ME!

MISS HAYAMA, ARE YOU IN LOVE WITH PROFESSOR KIRIDA?

... WHAT?!

W-WHY THAT'S— I MEAN, IN *LOVE* WITH HIM... A GREAT MAN LIKE THAT. AND HIS AGE...

NO. TO LOVE IS ONLY NATURAL.

I FELT THIS TODAY WHEN I MET WITH PROFESSOR KIRIDA. HE IS IN NEED OF LOVE.

HE HAS LIVED THUS FAR WITHOUT BEING LOVED. WE OUGHT TO OFFER HIM OUR SYMPATHY.

IF YOU COULD LOVE HIM FROM THE BOTTOM OF YOUR HEART ...

...HE MIGHT SEE THE BEAUTY OF YOUR WORK.

ALL RIGHT ...

FWOO

AH ?!

WHAT'S THE MATTER, FATHER?

OH. I FELT A GUST OF HOT AIR JUST NOW...

FATHER MURCHISON. IT SEEMS YOU'VE BEEN WHISPERING IN HAYAMA'S EAR?

WHAT ?!

EARLIER, SHE BROUGHT ME ONE OF THOSE FRANK PSYCHOLOGICAL STORIES THAT ARE SO POPULAR RIGHT NOW.

AND IT WAS ANNOYINGLY A LOVE LETTER TO ME BORROWING THE FORM OF A STORY!

NATURALLY, I RIPPED IT UP AND TOSSED IT AWAY ON THE SPOT. AND THEN I TOLD HER SHE HAD NO TALENT FOR WRITING AND SHE SHOULD GO BACK TO HER HOMETOWN IMMEDIATELY.

SHE LEFT IN TEARS. I'VE FINALLY GOTTEN RID OF THAT IDIOT.

THANK YOU, FATHER MURCHI-SON.

SPLSH
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
SPLSH
SUICIDE! IT'S A SUICIDE!
WHAT HAP-PENED?
WE GOT A DROWNER!
AAH!
...
DEAR LORD...
OHHHH...

LORD ...

PLEASE SAVE SUMIKO HAYAMA.

IF I HADN'T SAID THAT TO HER...

AAAH... WHAT SIN HAVE I COMMITTED ...?

NGH ...

HNGH ...

PROFESSOR? WHAT'S THE MATTER?

I-IT'S NOTH-ING.

LEAVE ME!

FATHER? YOU HAVE AN APPOINTMENT AT THIS HOUR?

EXCUSE ME.

I WISHED TO SPEAK WITH THE PROFES-SOR.

PROFESSOR, I'M TERRIBLY SORRY TO DISTURB YOU AT THIS HOUR.
BUT THE TRUTH IS, SOMETHING AWFUL'S HAPPENED.

THIS AFTERNOON, MISS SUMIKO HAYAMA—
FATHER MURCHISON.
YES ...?
LET ME ASK YOU.
YOU BELIEVE THAT... I AM ATTRACTIVE ENOUGH TO HAVE SOMEONE HAUNT ME, DON'T YOU?

WHAT?! ...Y-YES.
OF COURSE, A GREAT MAN SUCH AS YOURSELF... ARE YOU NOW...
IT'S QUITE DISAGREEABLE! THIS THING I DISLIKE LIKING ME, LINGERING AT MY SIDE...
FATHER, WOULDN'T YOU AGREE?!
Y— YES.

AWAY!
I SAID, GET AWAY!!
AAAH!
?!
YOU KNAVE! DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?!
YOU SHAN'T GET AWAY WITH THIS!
WHAT'S WRONG?!
PROFESSOR...
SOMETHING... SOMETHING HAS SLIPPED INTO MY HOUSE! I CAN FEEL IT!
IT'S NOT VISIBLE, BUT *IT* HAS SLIPPED INTO MY ROOM AND NOW IT HAUNTS ME. EVER SINCE THIS AFTERNOON...
AND NO MATTER WHERE I FLEE, IT FOLLOWS!

SOMETHING IS DEFINITELY HERE WITH ME.

I AM OF SOUND MIND!

IT'S NOT... VISIBLE?

YES, THAT'S RIGHT! WHY DO YOU STARE AT ME SO?!

IT SEEKS LOVE FROM ME! EVEN THOUGH I'VE HAD QUITE ENOUGH OF THAT WITH SUMIKO HAYAMA!

IT CLEARLY HAS LUST FOR ME!

IT BREATHES ITS HOT BREATH ON MY NECK...

...IT CARESSES MY BODY!! AAH, SO DISGUSTING!

PROFESSOR, ABOUT MISS HAYAMA...

SHE ATTEMPTED SUICIDE THIS AFTERNOON BY JUMPING IN THE RIVER.

...

WHAT?!

Y-YOU—!!

AND... IS SHE DEAD?

NO. NOT AT THE MOMENT.

BUT SHE'S STILL UN-CONSCIOUS, HOVERING BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH...

PROFES-SOR, PLEASE PRAY WITH ME...

...FOR THE LORD TO WATCH OVER MISS HAYAMA.

WHY SHOULD *I* PRAY?!

ARE YOU SAYING IT'S *MY* FAULT THAT HAYAMA TRIED TO KILL HERSELF?!

NO... THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.

HMPH. PRAYER! YOU'RE A PREACHER. GET RID OF *THIS!*

IF YOU CAN'T DO THAT, THEN GET OUT.

GET OUT...

GET OUT!

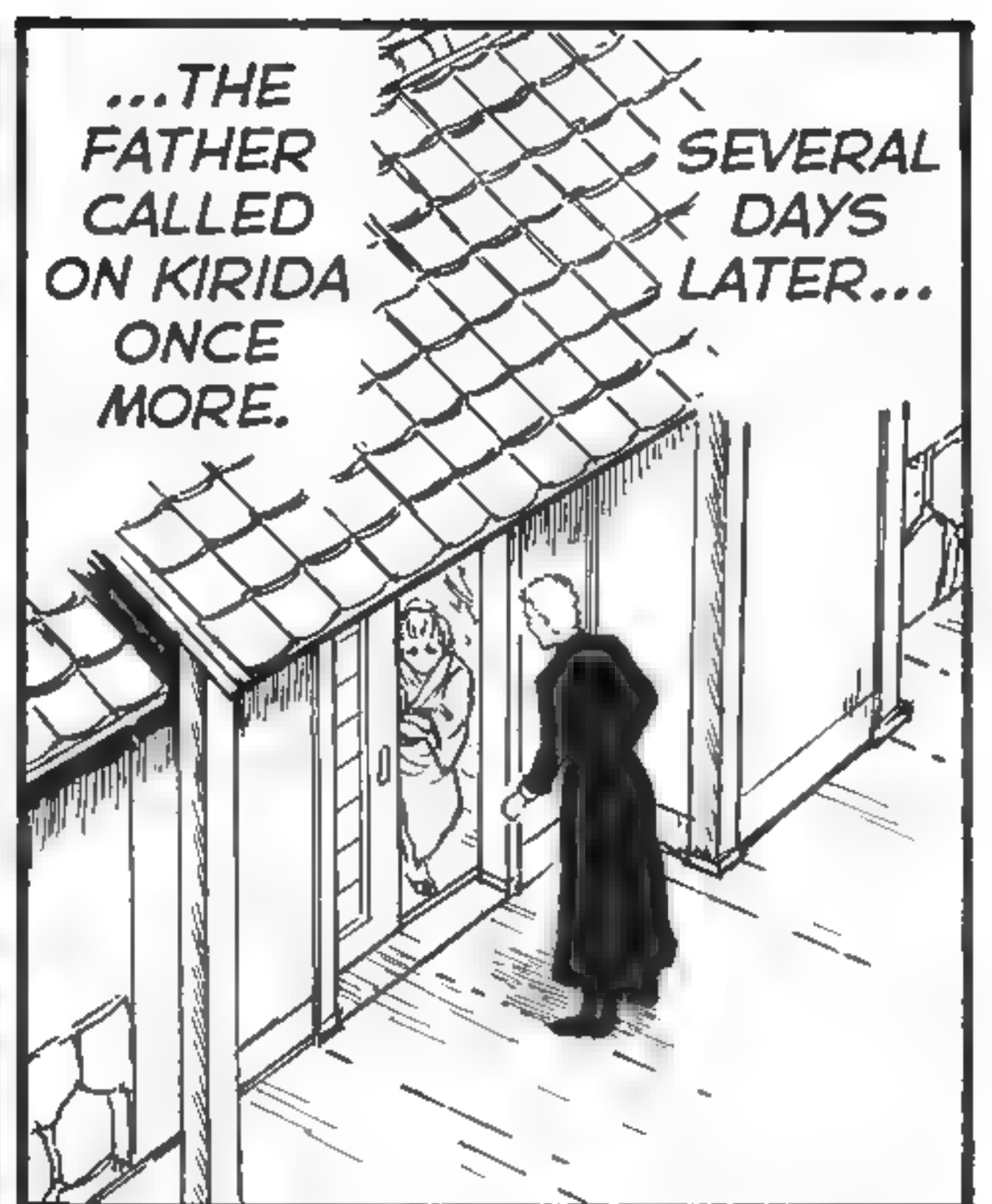
AAH! DAMMIT!

...

PLEASE, I BEG YOU, HELP THE PROFES-SOR...

FATHER, I'M SO SCARED, SO VERY FRIGHTENED.

SEVERAL DAYS LATER...

...THE FATHER CALLED ON KIRIDA ONCE MORE.

HAAH.

HAAH, HAAH.

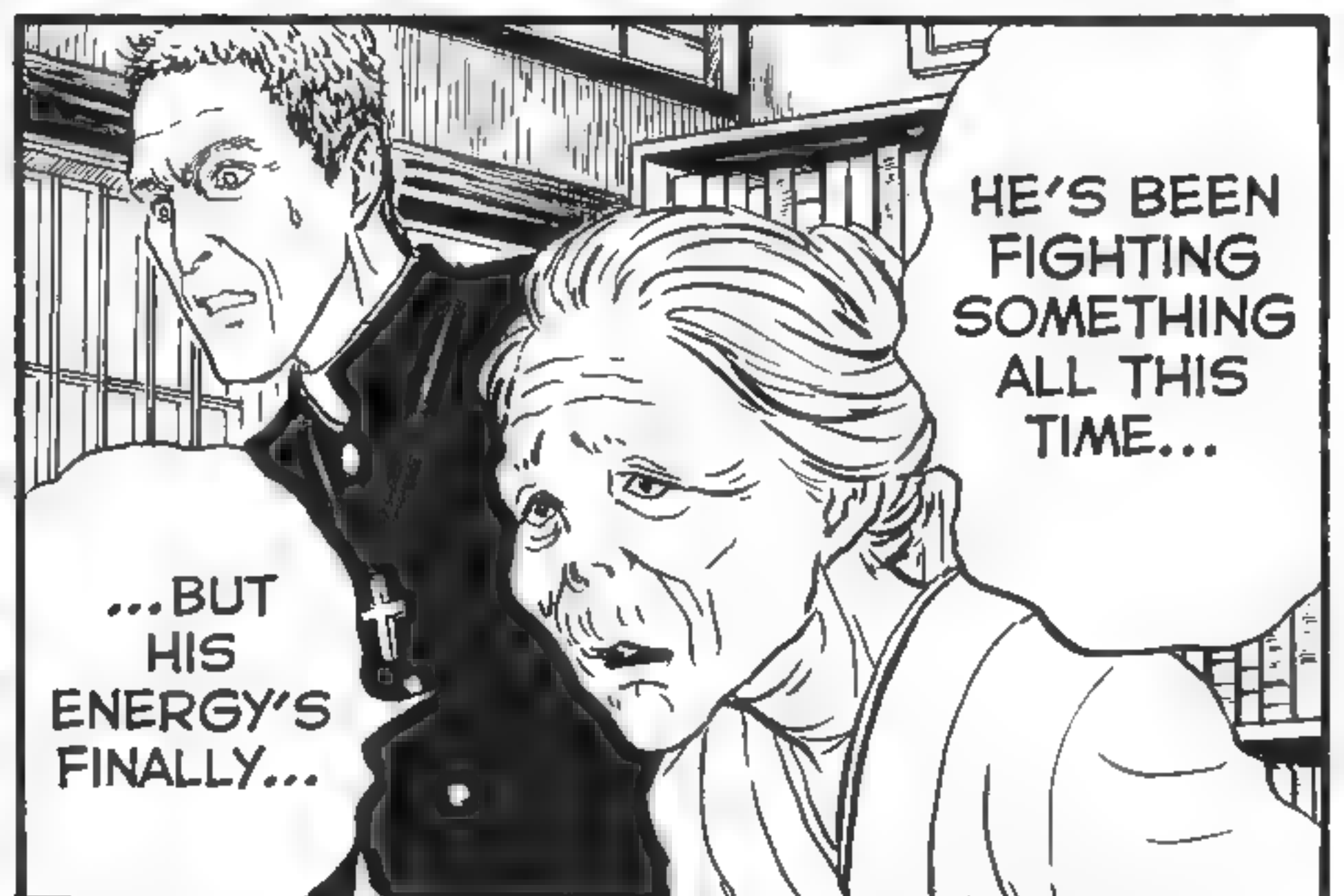
HAAH, HAAH.

HAAH.

HAAH.

YOU MUST REMAIN STRONG.

PROFES-SOR.

HE'S BEEN FIGHTING SOMETHING ALL THIS TIME...

...BUT HIS ENERGY'S FINALLY...

Y-YOU SICKEN ME...

...SUMIKO HAYAMA...

WHAT?

FATHER, *IT* IS IN FACT HAYAMA.

IT COULDN'T BE ANYONE ELSE.

IT APPEARED AT THE SAME TIME AS HER SUICIDE ATTEMPT.

I DO NOT WISH TO BELIEVE ANYTHING UNSCIENTIFIC.

BUT I'VE NO DOUBT THAT HAYAMA'S MIND SLIPPED OUT OF HER BODY AND CAME TO ME HERE.

THAT HAYAMA... HOW FAR WILL SHE GO TO RIDICULE ME?!

FATHER, I SUPPOSE YOU WOULD REPROACH ME. BUT A THING THAT IS HATEFUL IS SIMPLY HATEFUL!

YOU UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU? HOW DISGUSTING IT IS FOR AN UNDESIRED PARTNER TO COME CLOSE, BE SWEET TO YOU, CARESS YOU IN THE MOST LEWD WAYS...

NO, YOU COULD NEVER UNDERSTAND. YOU AND YOUR LOVE...

I SUPPOSE YOU CAN ACCEPT THE LOVE OF ALL HUMANITY?

N-NO...

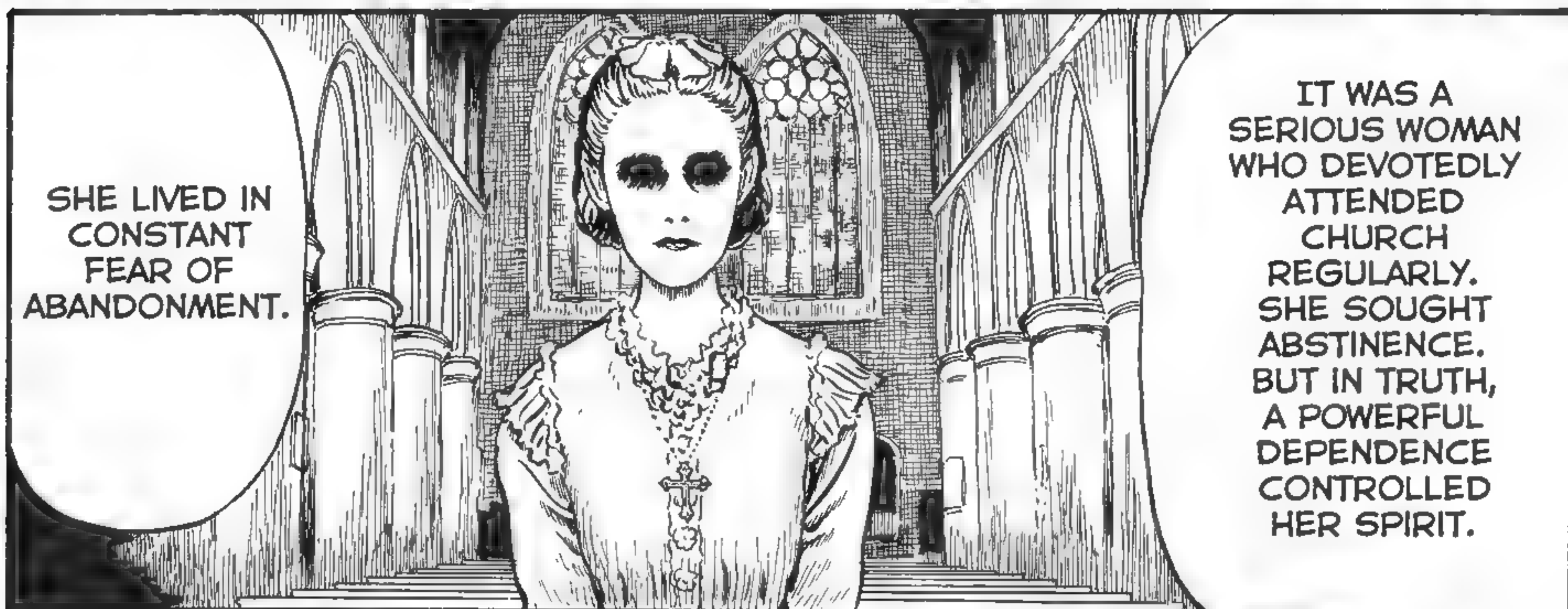
I *DO* UNDERSTAND.

I UNDERSTAND, PROFESSOR KIRIDA.

I'VE ALSO HAD THIS EXPERIENCE.

IN MY NATIVE LAND, MEN OF THE CLOTH OCCASIONALLY BECOME TARGETS FOR LOVE.

AND I TOO BECAME SUCH A TARGET ONCE.

IT WAS A SERIOUS WOMAN WHO DEVOTEDLY ATTENDED CHURCH REGULARLY. SHE SOUGHT ABSTINENCE. BUT IN TRUTH, A POWERFUL DEPENDENCE CONTROLLED HER SPIRIT.

SHE LIVED IN CONSTANT FEAR OF ABANDONMENT.

HER FAITH EVENTUALLY DEVELOPED INTO A STRONG DEPENDENCE ON ME.

I LECTURED HER ON SELF-RELIANCE AND LOVE OF MAN...

...BUT SHE WOULD NOT HEAR A WORD OF IT.

AND HER FEELINGS CAME TO BE SOMETHING IMMORAL.

SHE BEGAN TO AMBUSH ME AFTER EVENING PRAYERS.

SHE DID WHATEVER SHE COULD TO ATTRACT MY ATTENTION. YES, WHATEVER SHE COULD...

IT'S UNCOMFORTABLE TO REMEMBER IT.

OF COURSE, FROM THE POSITION OF PASTOR...

BUT NOW I FEEL THAT I SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE COMPASSIONATE WITH HER. I REGRET IT.

PROFESSOR KIRIDA, IT'S THE SAME FOR YOU, WITH A POSITION SUCH AS YOURS.
YOU SAY I SHOULD SHOW COMPASSION?! HOW?! SHOULD I HAVE ACCEPTED HAYAMA'S LOVE, LOVED HER BACK?!
PLEASE DO NOT MAKE ME LAUGH, SIR!
LOVE! HA HA HA!
AAAAAH!
NGH NGH NGH NGH NGH
HAAAAH
FWOOO
SHF SHF

STOOOOP!
STOP IT.
STOP.
AAAAAH!
NGH! NGH!

HERE... INDEED... THERE'S SOMETHING HERE...

SOME-THING IS TOUCHING THE PRO-FESSOR...

OHHHH!

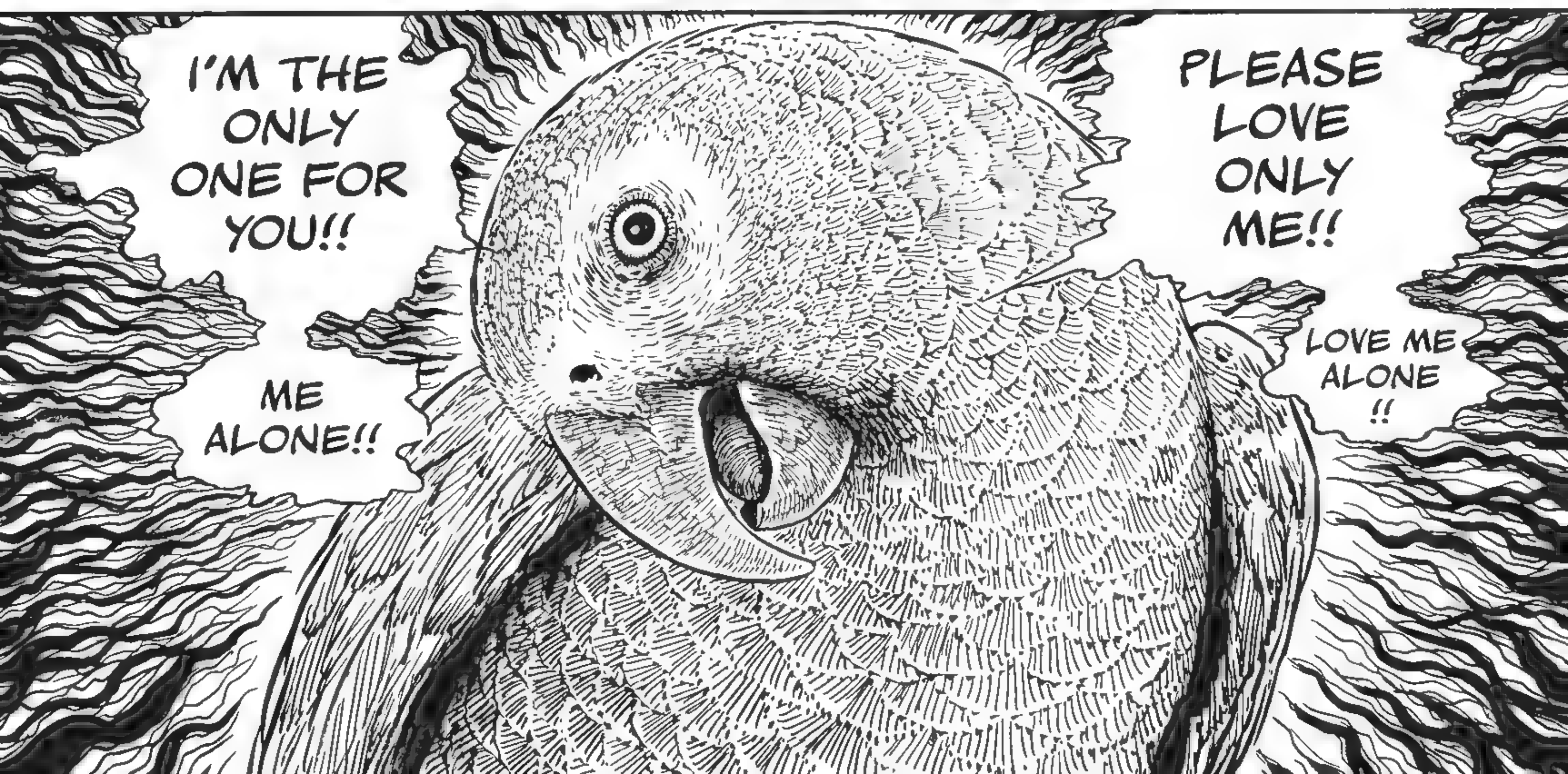
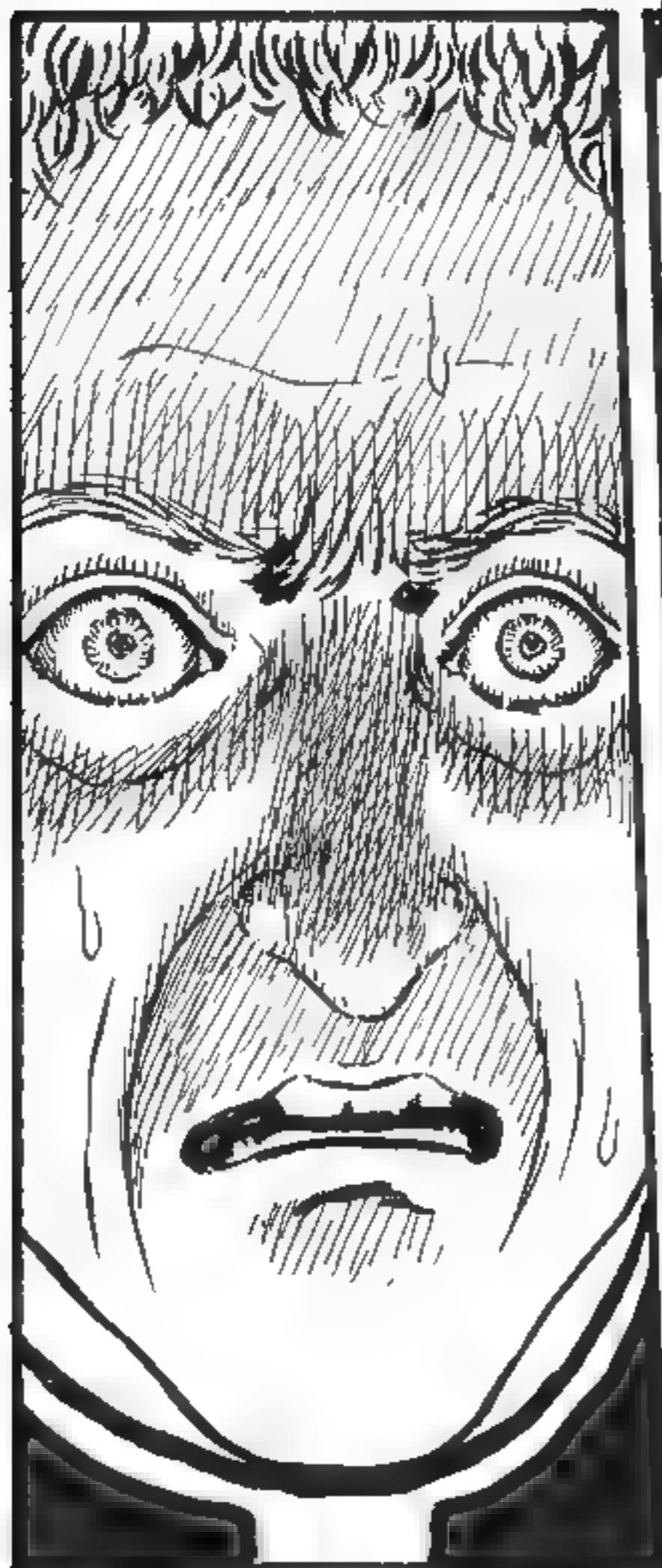
OHHHH!

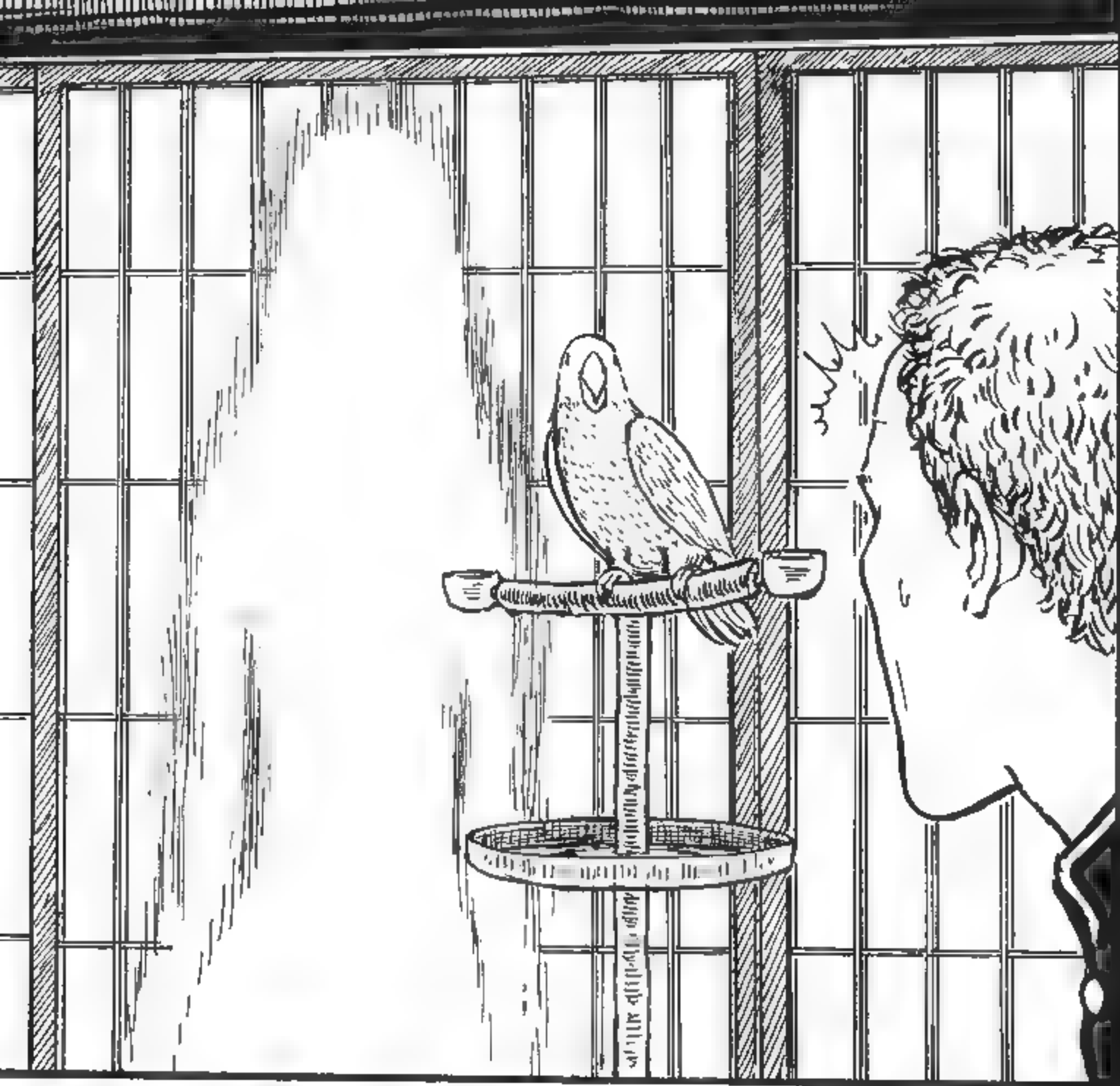
EEEEE!

AAAAH!

AAAAAAH!!

OHHHHHHH!!

I WANT YOUUUUUU!
I LOVE YOUUUUUU!
I'M THE ONLY ONE FOR YOU!!
PLEASE LOVE ONLY ME!!
ME ALONE!!
LOVE ME ALONE !!

AAAAAAH!!
PLEASE, MAKE ME HAPPY!!
ONLY ME!!
PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME!!
ONLY ME!!
HNNNGH.
UNH!
THUNK
PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME!!
AAAAAAAH!!
FATHER MURCHISON!

PROFESSOR!

OH! I'M SO SORRY, FATHER MURCHISON. I WAS TRYING TO MAKE YOU JEALOUS. PLEASE FORGIVE ME.

I'M SORRY. FORGIVE ME.

BUT IT'S YOUR FAULT FOR HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH THAT JAPANESE GIRL.

YOU WERE IN THE WRONG.

AFTER SHE REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS, SUMIKO HAYAMA WROTE THE STORY FATHER MURCHISON TOLD HER IN HER JOURNAL.

THE PRIEST LEFT THIS WORLD WITHOUT TELLING ANYONE ELSE ABOUT ENGAI KIRIDA'S DEATH.

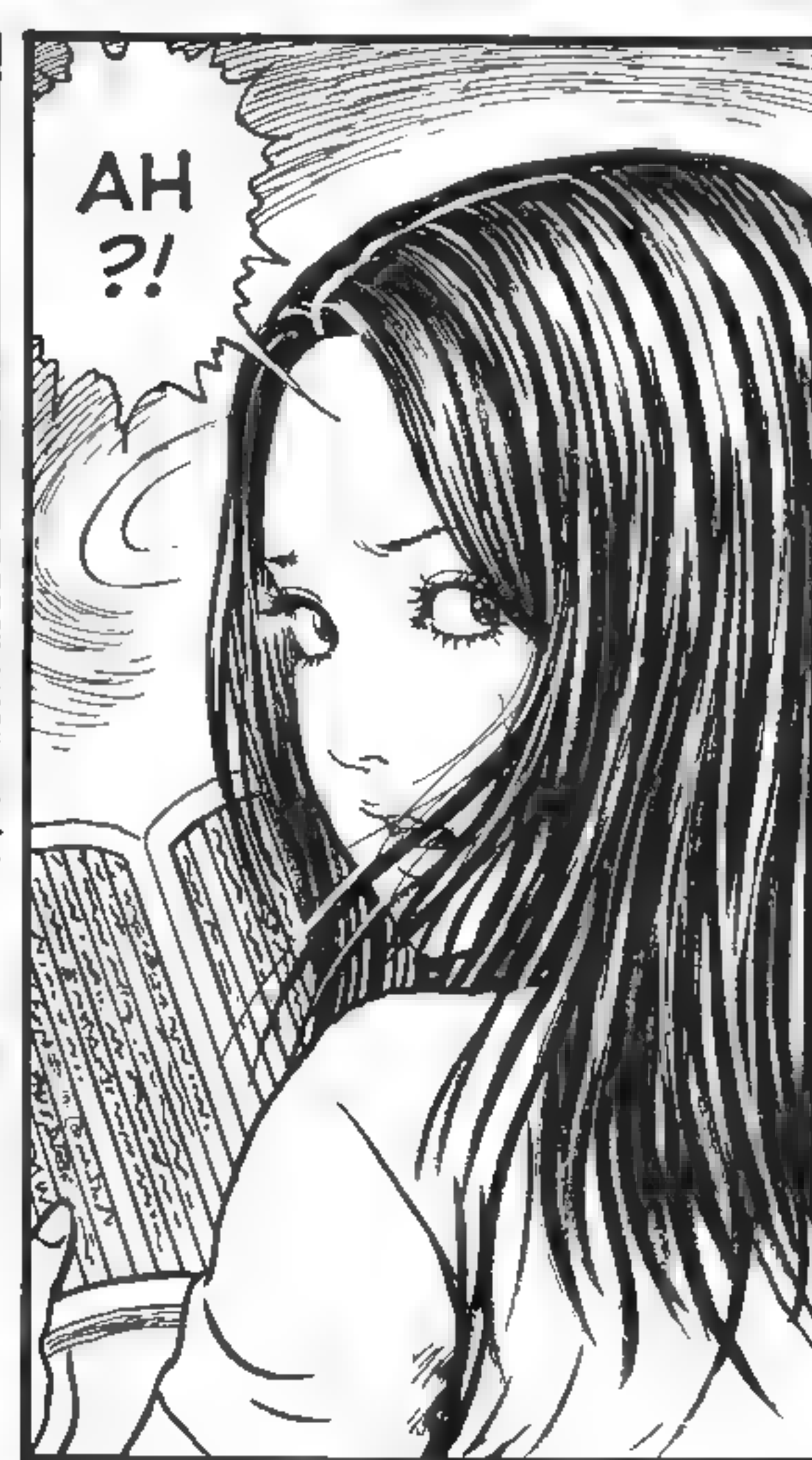
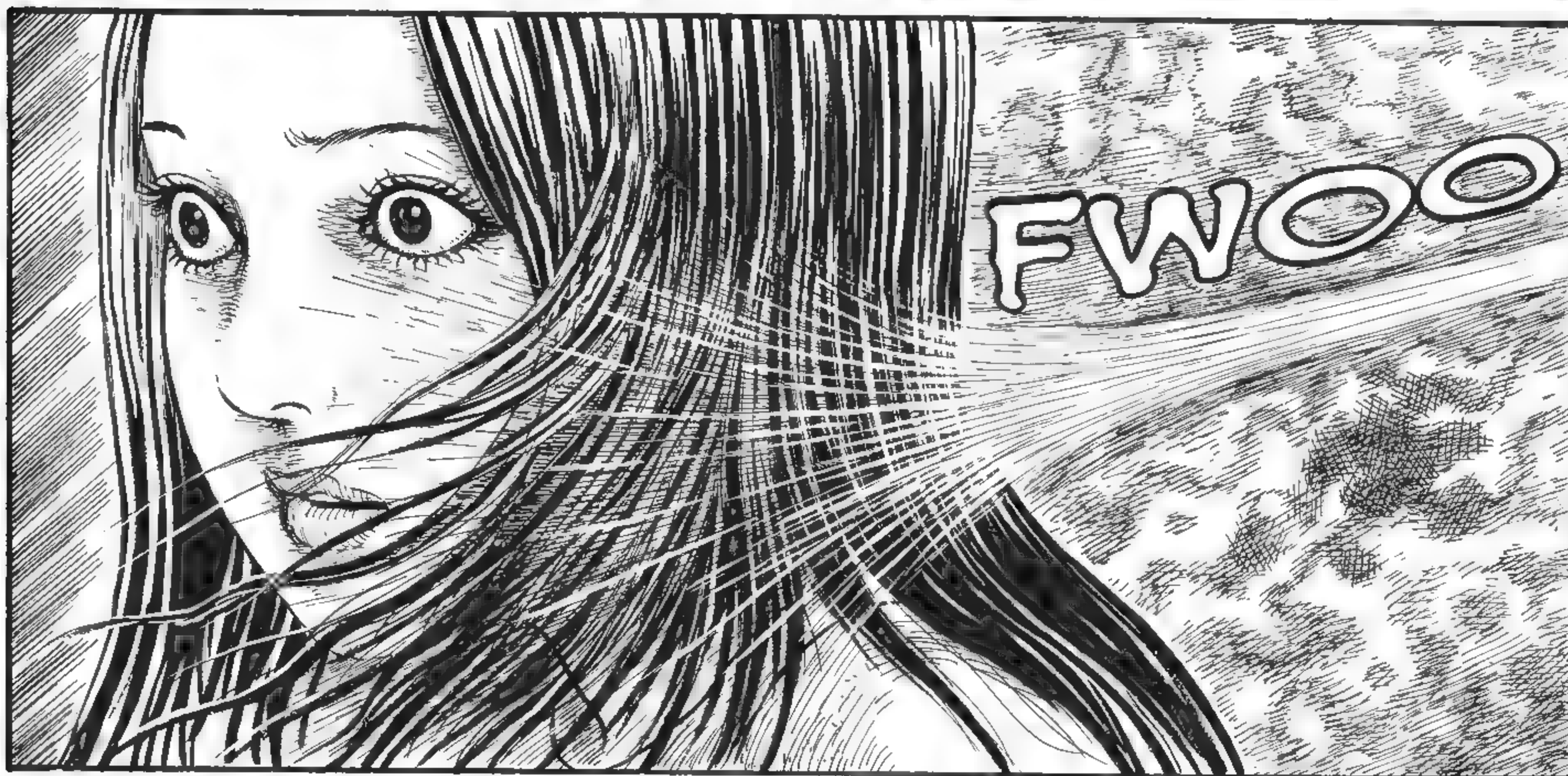
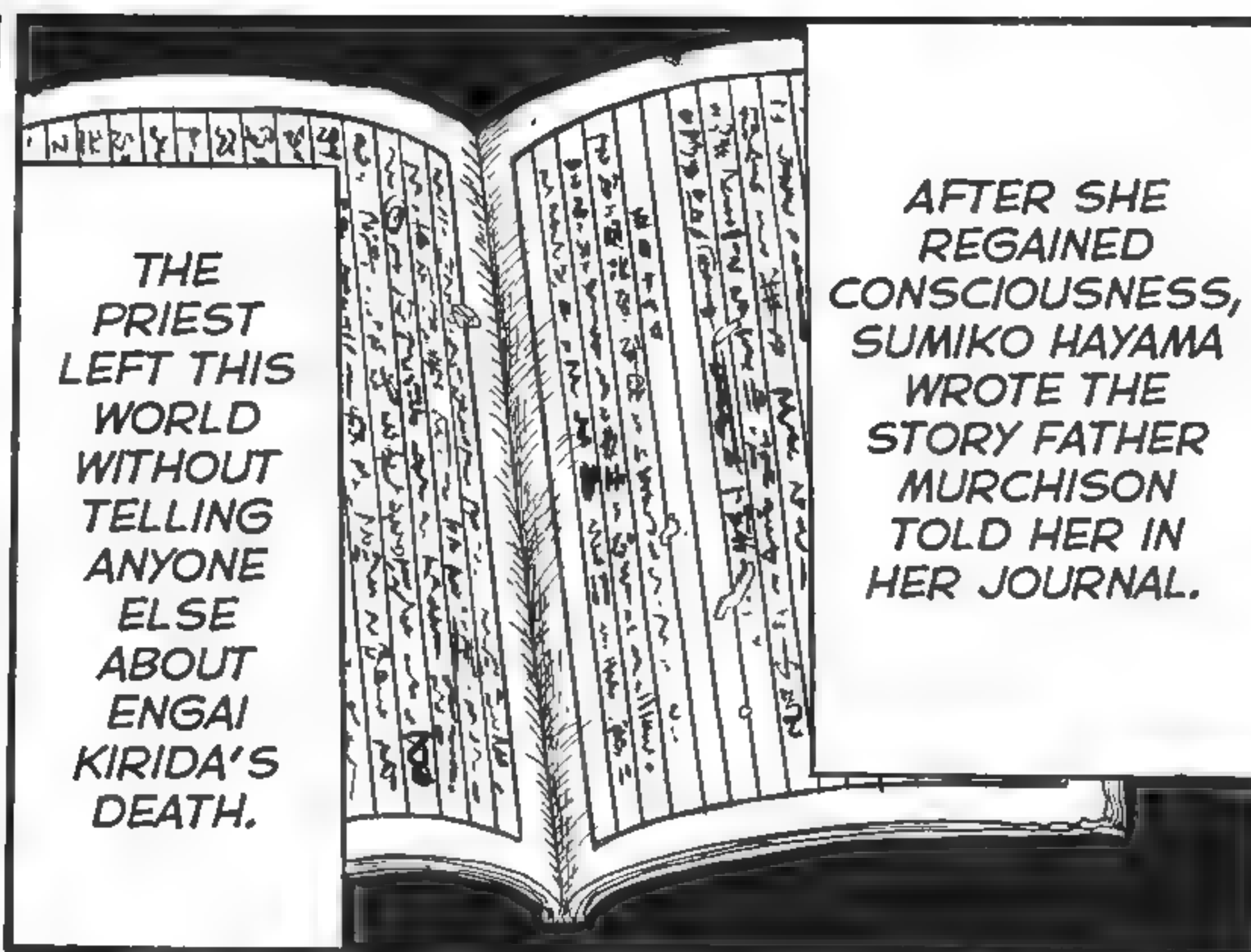
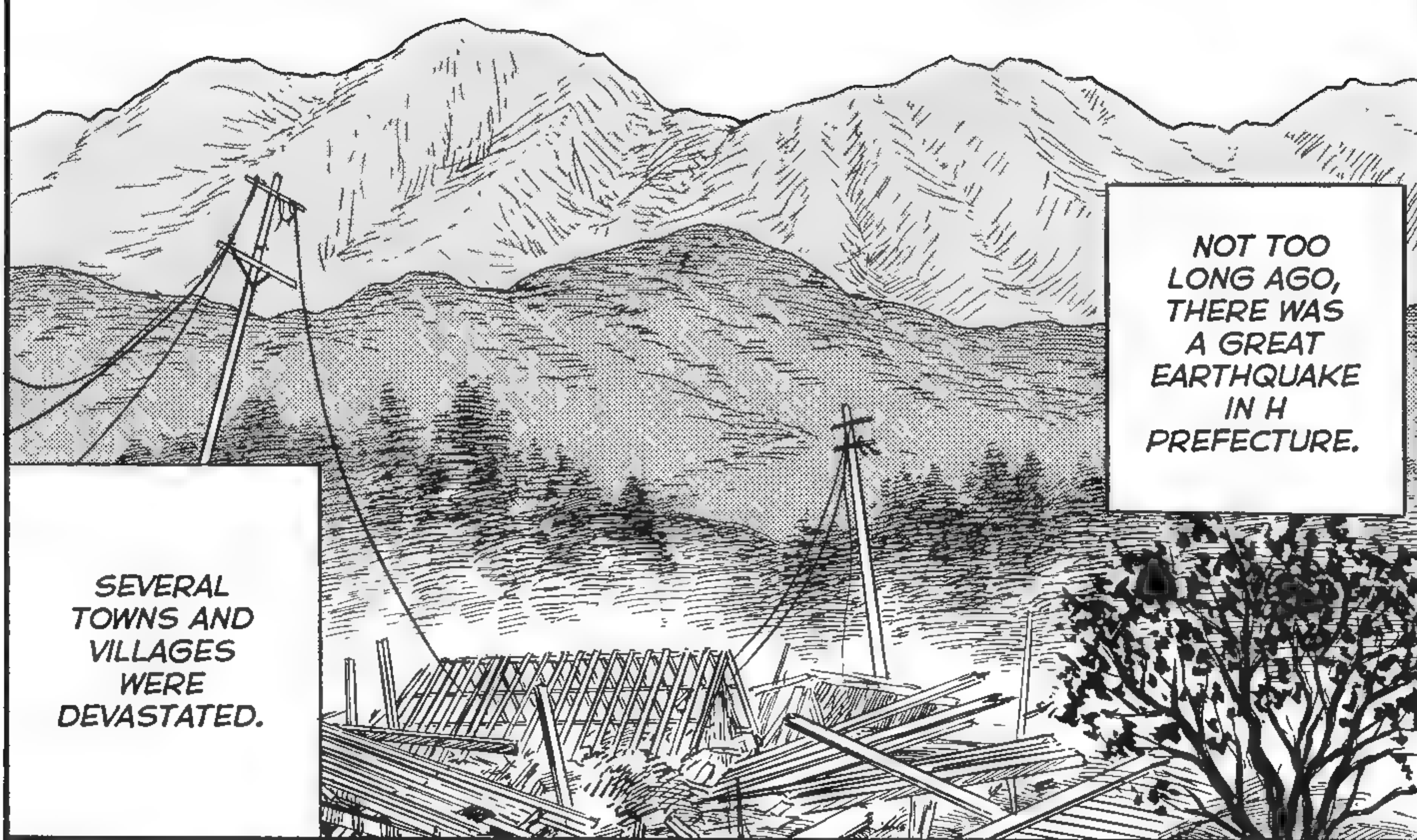
IF THIS STORY IS TRUE...

...MAYBE ONLY THE PARROT COULD SEE THE PASSION OF THE FURIOUS WOMAN.

FWOO

AH ?!

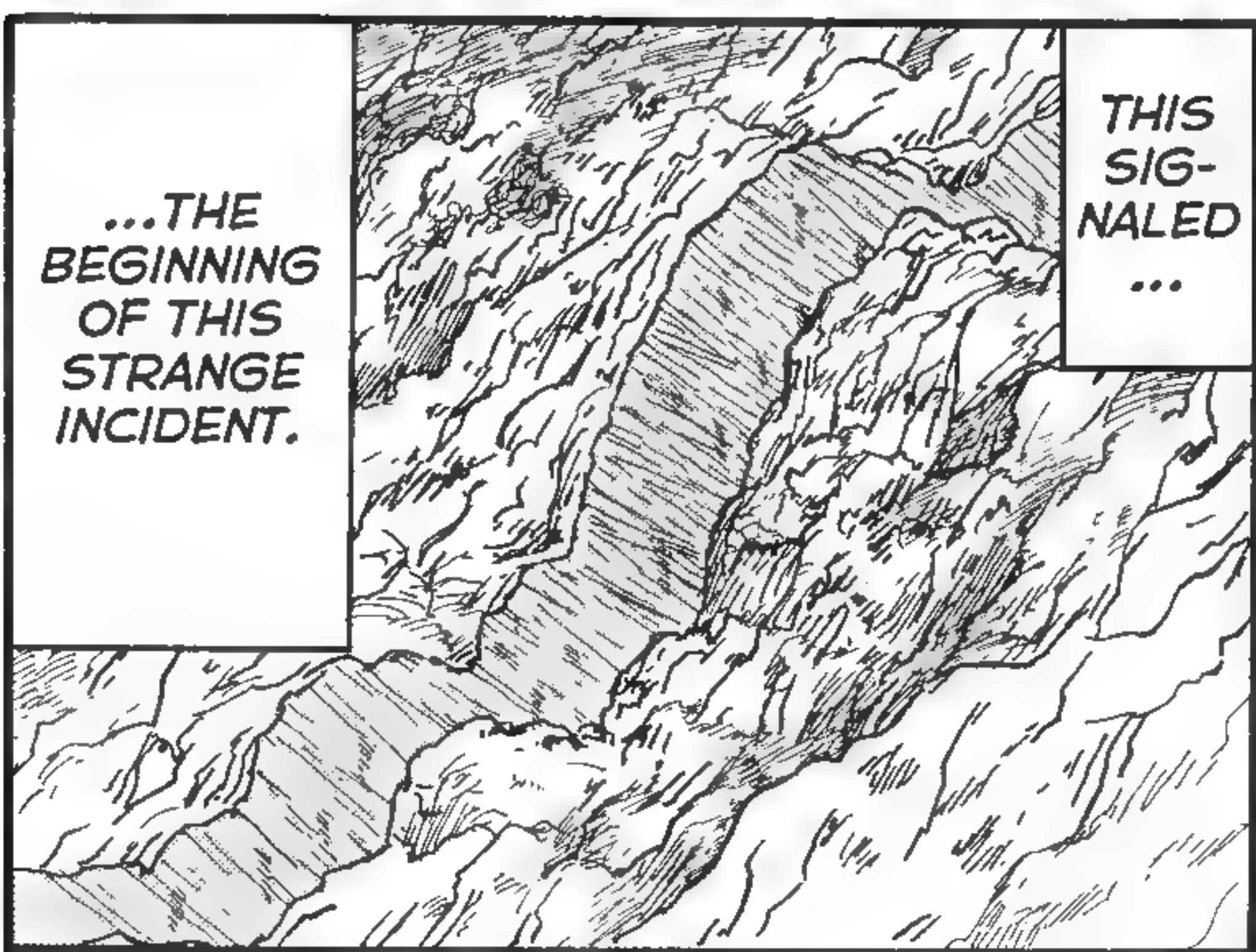
I... I'M SURE...

...I FELT A HOT BREATH JUST NOW...

THE ENIGMA OF AMIGARA FAULT

NOT TOO LONG AGO, THERE WAS A GREAT EARTHQUAKE IN H PREFECTURE.

SEVERAL TOWNS AND VILLAGES WERE DEVASTATED.

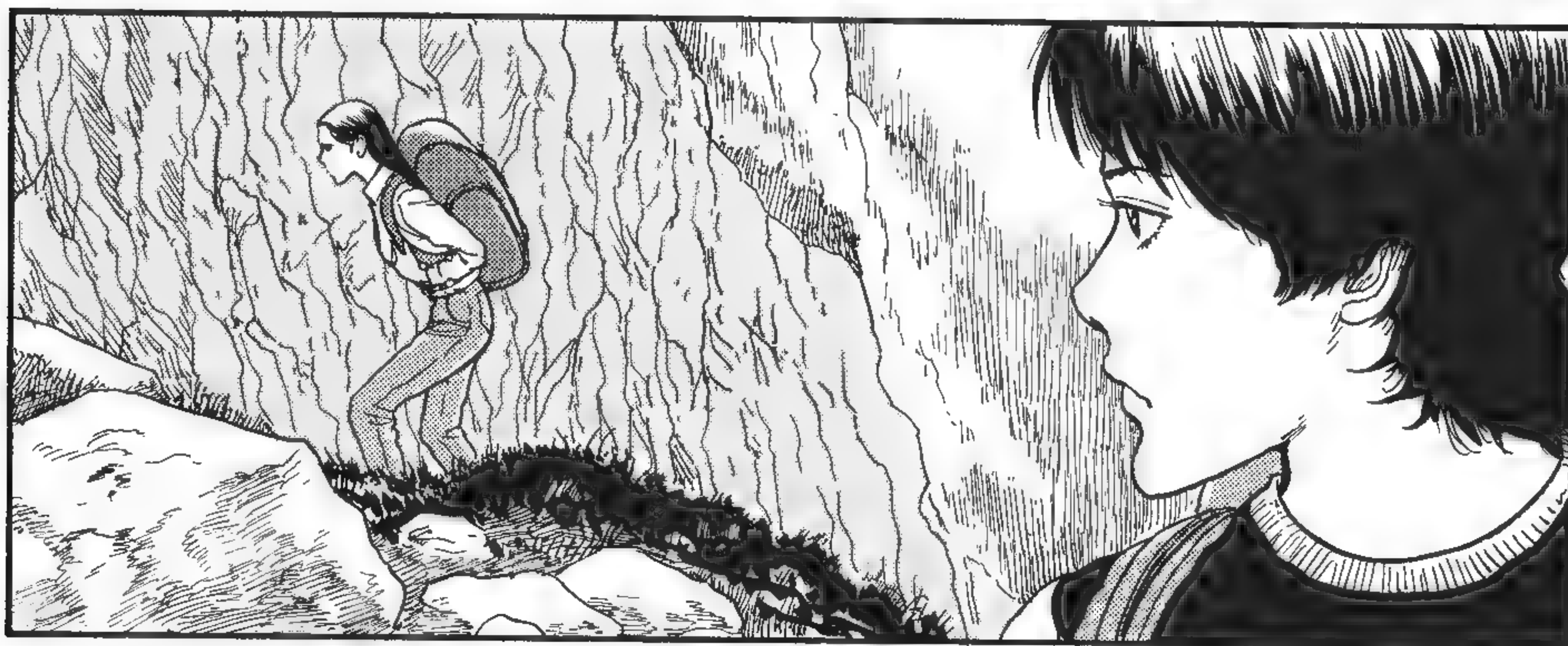
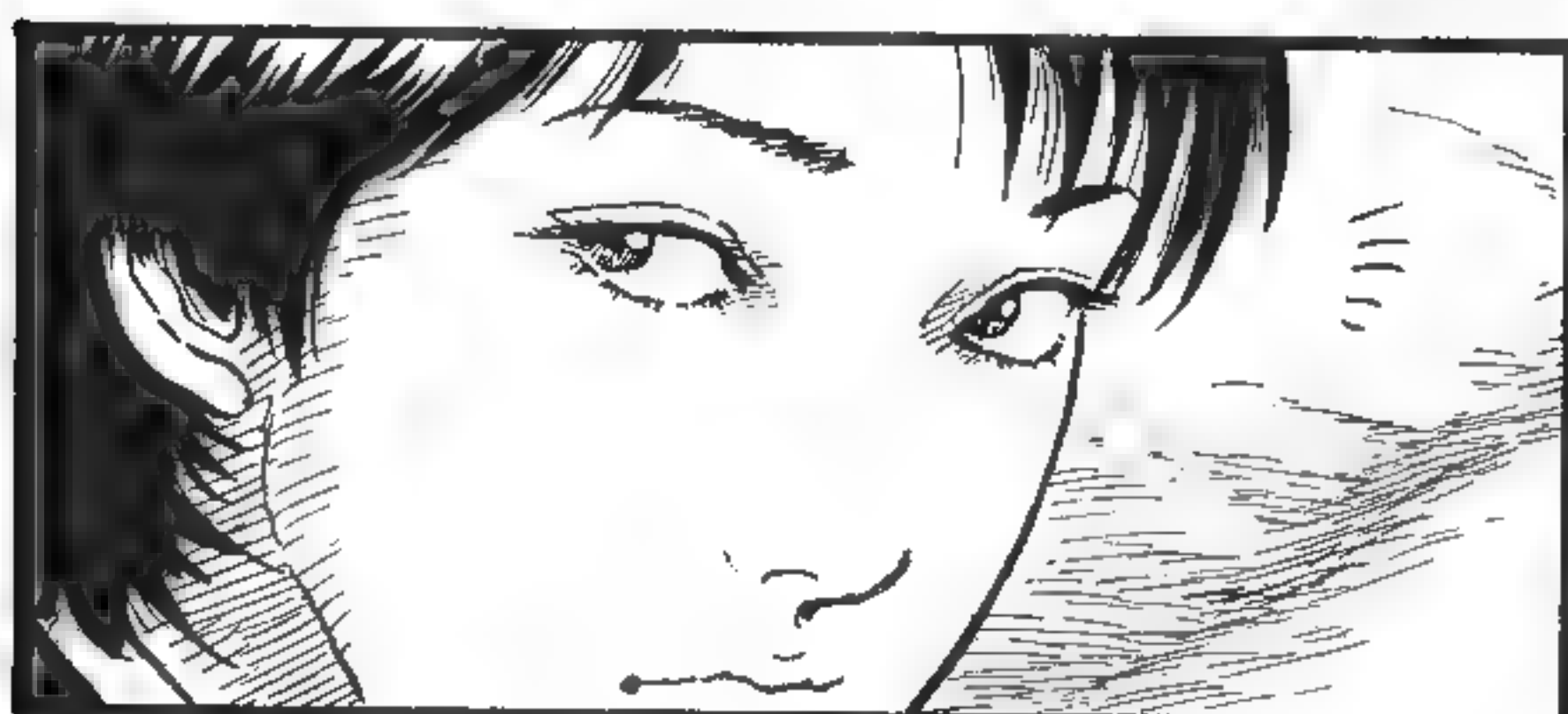
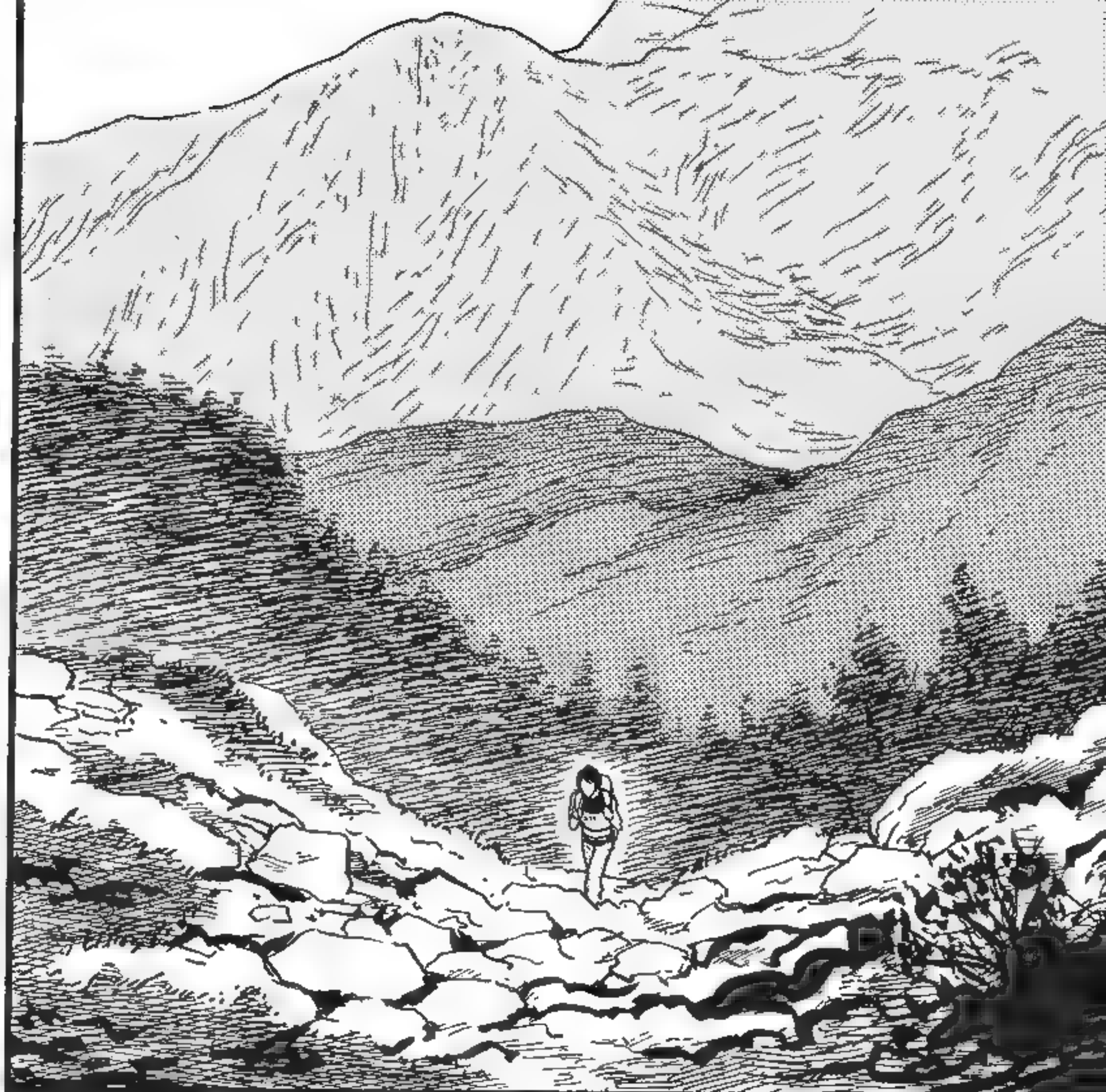
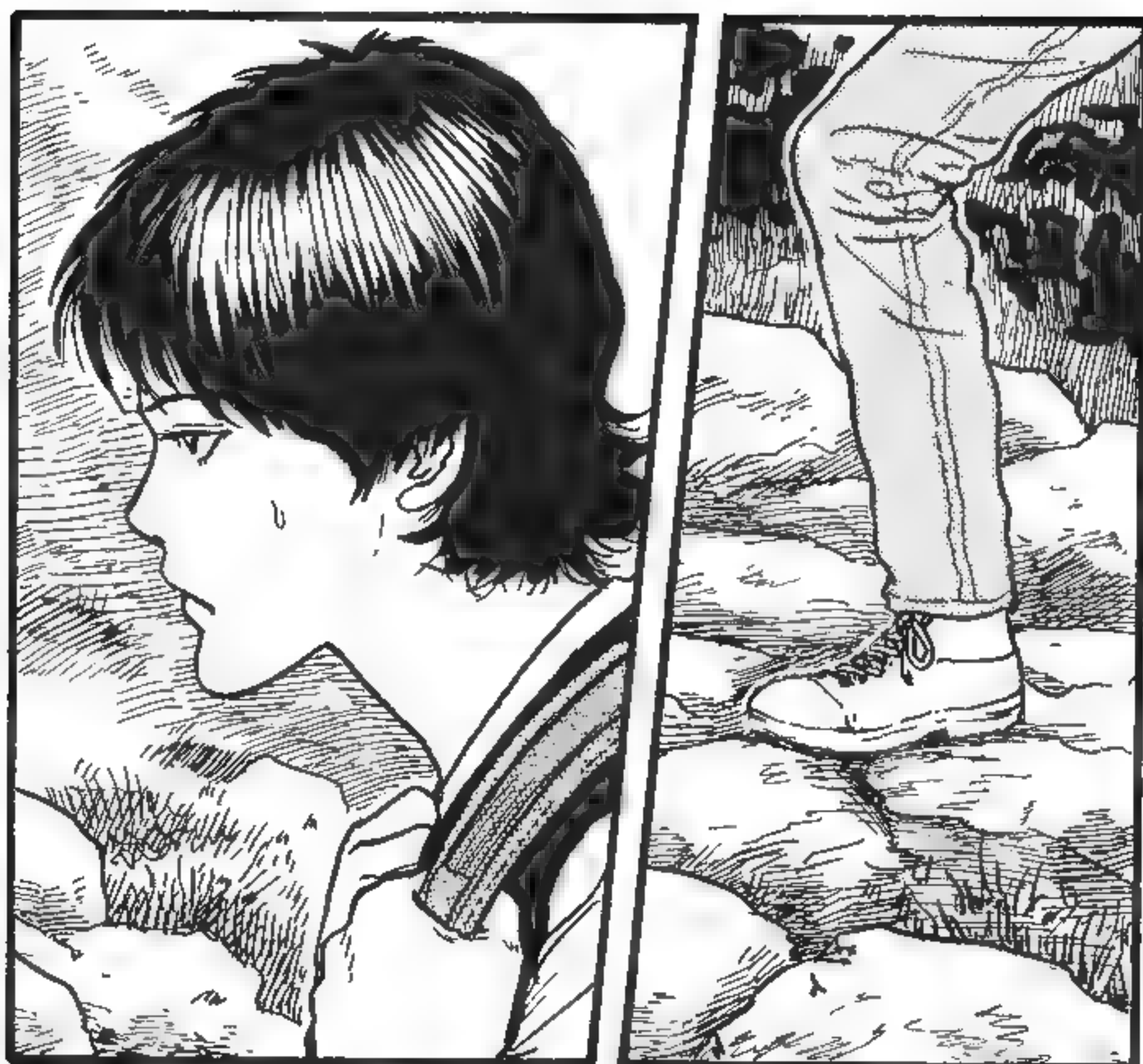
FOLLOWING THE EARTHQUAKE, A LARGE FAULT WAS DISCOVERED NEAR THE EPICENTER...

...ON THE NORTH SLOPE OF THE AMIGARA MOUNTAIN.

THE FAULT WAS DEEP AND SEVERAL KILO-METERS LONG.

THIS SIG-NALED ...

...THE BEGINNING OF THIS STRANGE INCIDENT.

HMM ...
AM I STILL ON AMIGARA MOUNTAIN? I'VE BEEN CLIMBING FOR A WHILE...
BUT I STILL HAVEN'T SEEN ANY-THING ...

HEY! HELLO OVER THERE!

SO ARE YOU LOOKING FOR THE FAULT, TOO?

I THOUGHT THAT MUST BE WHY YOU CAME HERE— I MEAN NO OFFENSE— A WOMAN HIKER, ALL ALONE.

I'M OWAKI... WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

I'M YOSHIDA.

IT'S A REAL MYSTERY, ISN'T IT?

REALLY? IT WAS THE SAME WITH ME.

I SAW IT ALL ON TV. IT KIND OF MADE ME RESTLESS...

...WHEN I SAW IT I KNEW I HAD TO GO.

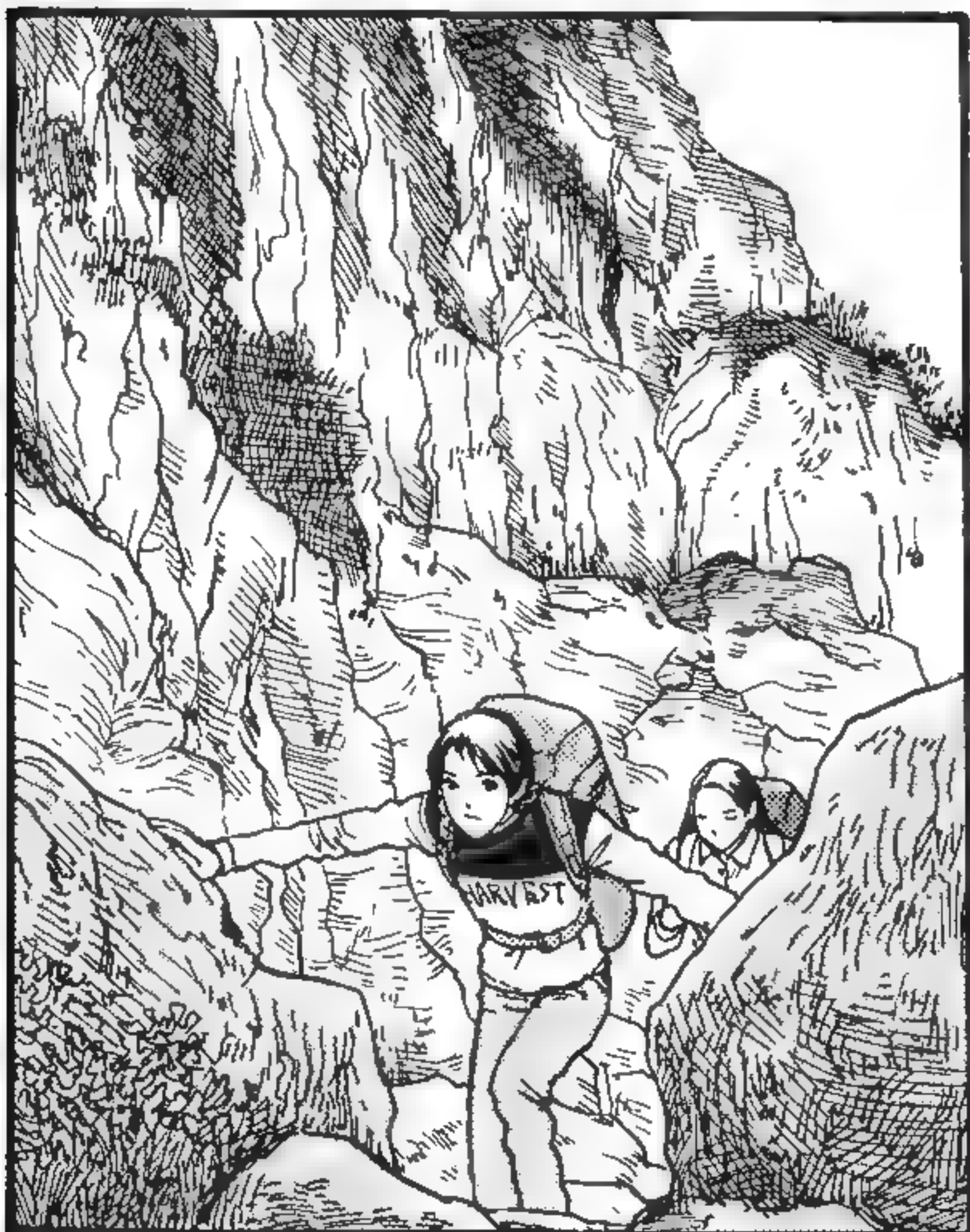
IT'S A WONDER OF NATURE...

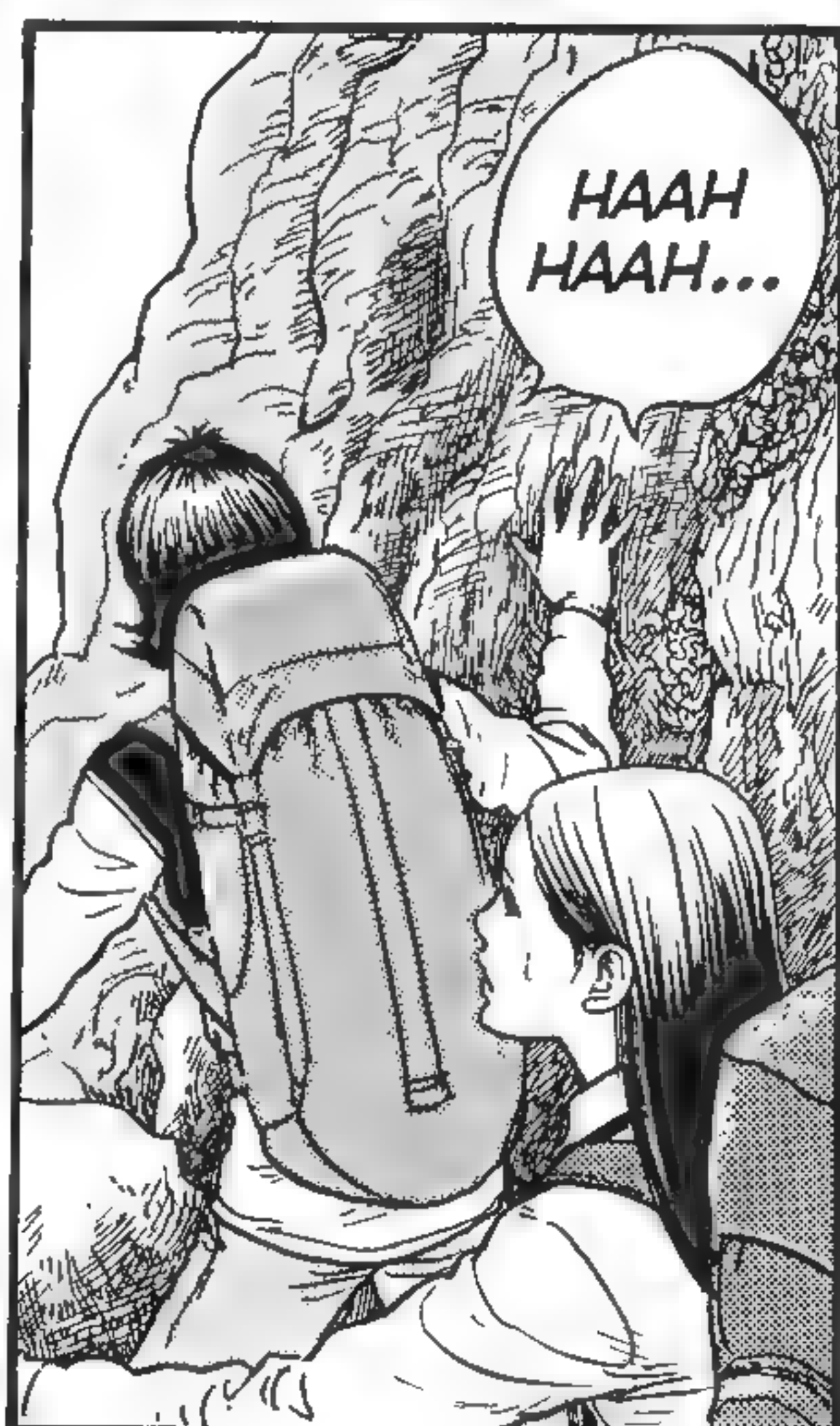
IT'S GOT THE ENTIRE COUNTRY—NO THE ENTIRE WORLD, TRANSFIXED.

HM?

DID YOU HEAR VOICES?

MUTTER

MUTTER

IT MUST BE THE OTHERS WHO'VE COME HERE.

LET'S HEAD THAT WAY! I'M SURE WE'RE NEAR THE FAULT.

HAAH HAAH...

!

IT'S JUST LIKE HOW IT WAS ON TV...
...BUT A LOT MORE POWERFUL.
THOUSANDS OF HUMAN-SHAPED HOLES...
...FOUND IN THE FAULT EXPOSED BY THE EARTHQUAKE.
SO BEFORE THE QUAKE, THEY WERE UNDERGROUND.
IT MAKES YOU WONDER, HOW COULD IT HAPPEN...
LOOK AT THAT... MAYBE THEY'RE UNIVERSITY RESEARCHERS.
THEY'RE CHECKING OUT THE HOLES.

HMM...IT SEEMS TO CURVE OFF INSIDE THE MOUNTAIN.

IN ANY CASE ...

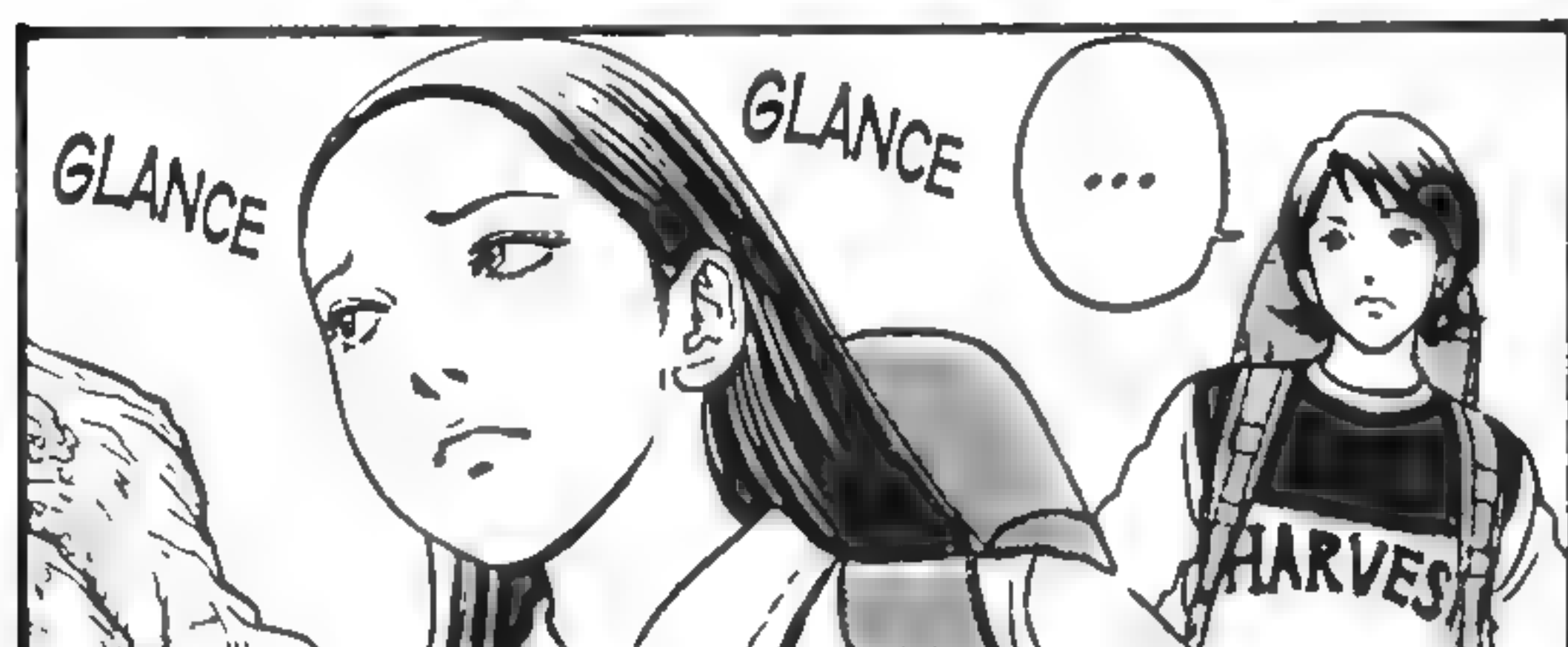
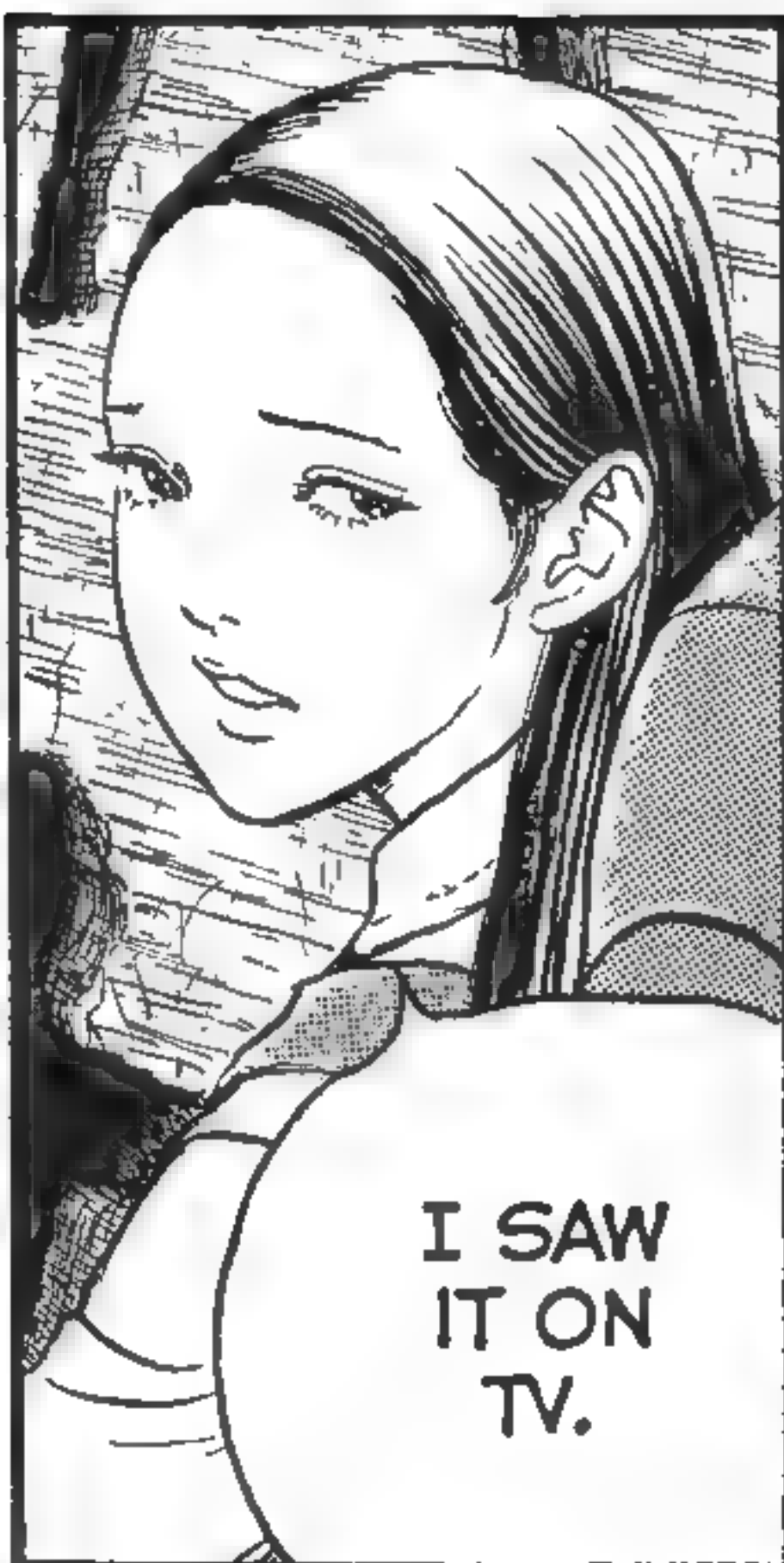
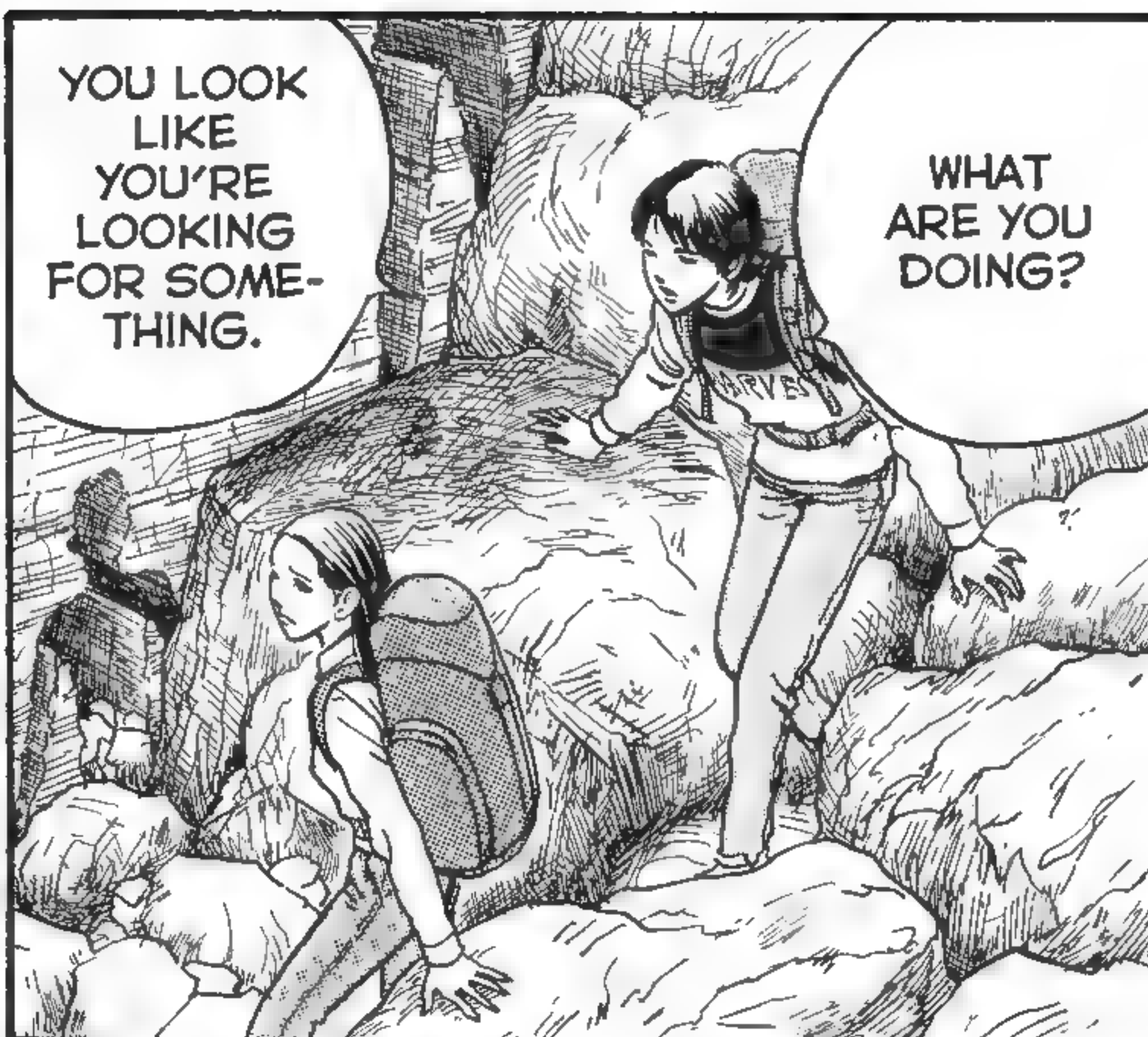
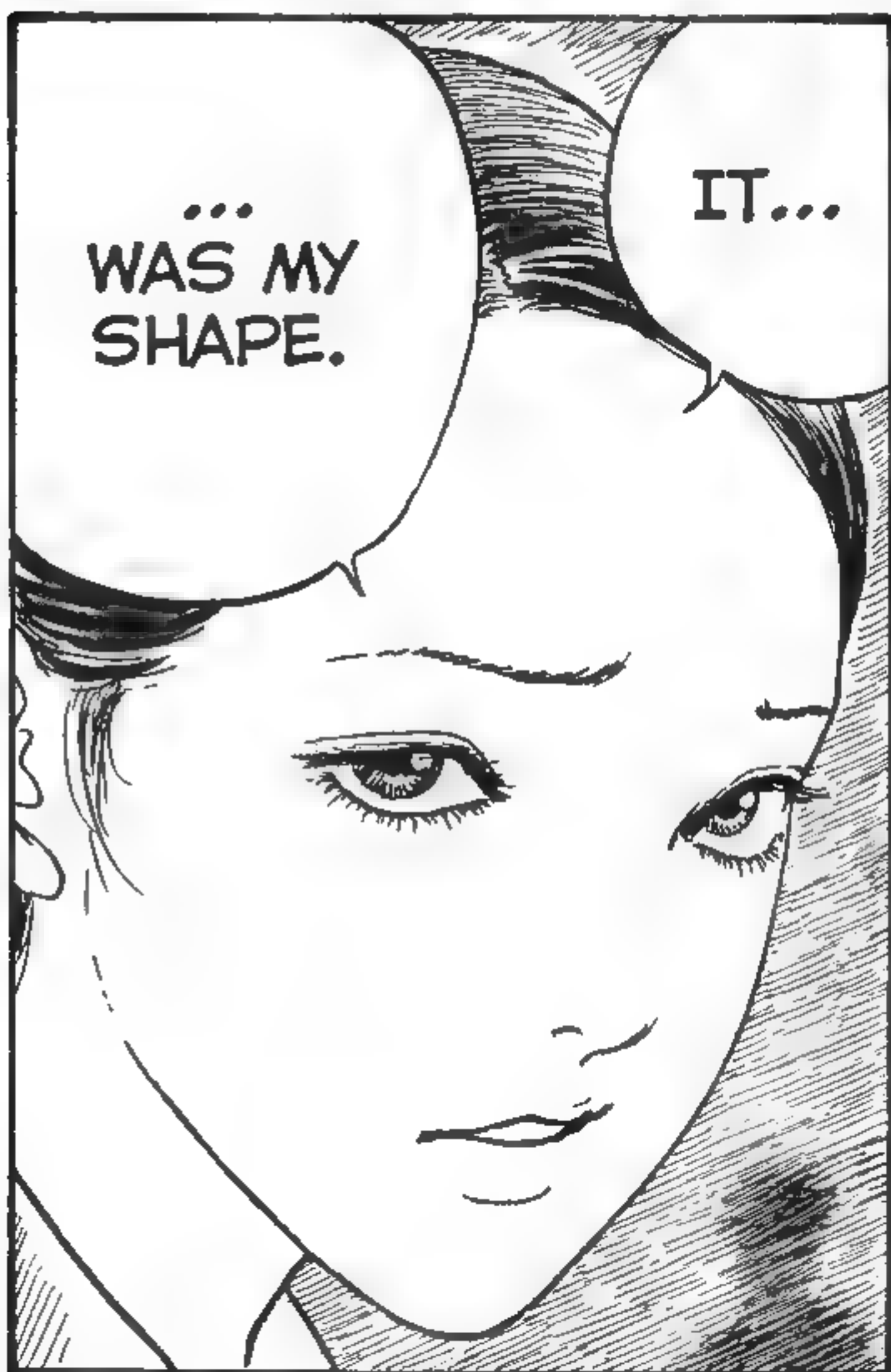
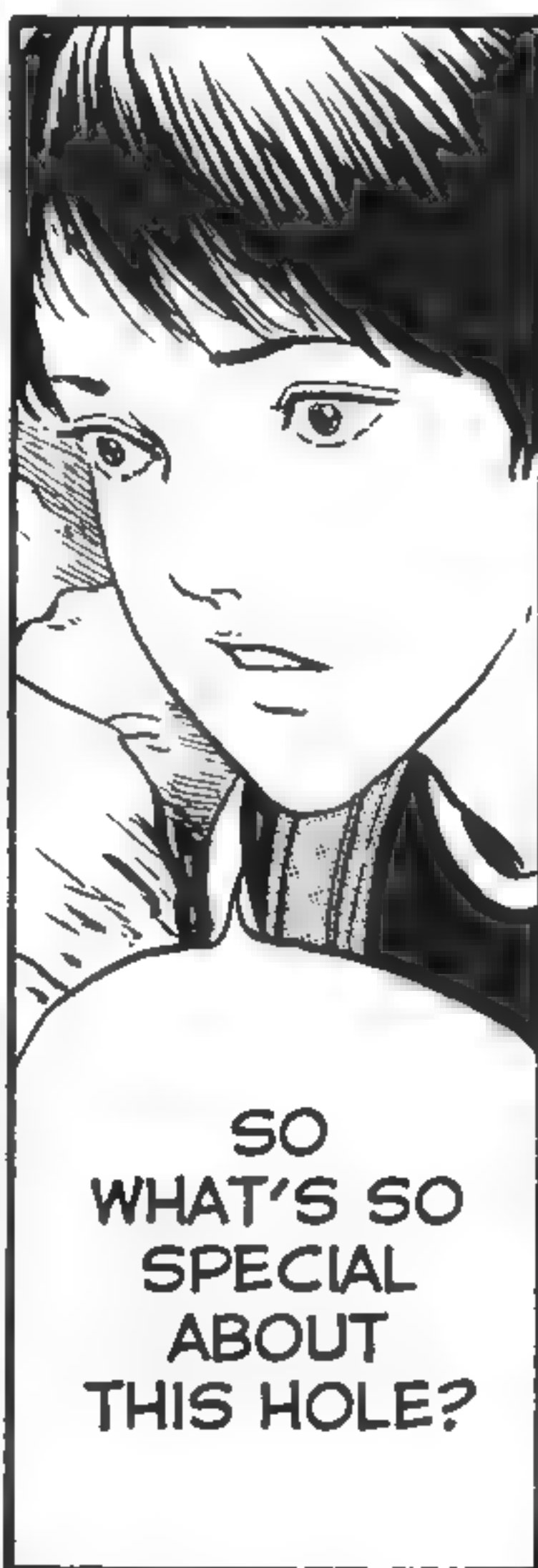
HOW DEEP DO YOU THINK IT GOES, PROFESSOR?

EVEN THIS 30-METER FIBER SCOPE CAN'T FIND THE END.

BUT HOW COULD YOU DIG THIS SHAPE OUT OF SUCH SOLID ROCK?

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE THAT THIS COULD BE A NATURAL FORMATION.

SOMEONE MUST HAVE DUG THEM OUT FROM INSIDE.

I THINK THE ENTRANCE WAS SEALED UP WITH THE ACCUMULATION OF SOIL OVER THE YEARS...
...THE SAME FORCES THAT COVERED UP THESE HOLES.
BESIDES, WOULDN'T THERE BE A TRACE OF AN ENTRANCE OF SOME KIND?
NO ONE'S FOUND ANYTHING LIKE THAT.
CAREFUL, YOSHIDA.
IT'S STEEP.
GLANCE
GLANCE
...
THEN THESE HOLES MUST BE ANCIENT. BUT IF THAT'S THE CASE, WHO HAD THE TECHNOLOGY TO MAKE THEM?
AND WHAT PURPOSE DID THEY SERVE ...?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE LOOKING FOR SOME-THING.
I SAW IT ON TV.
WHAT ...
WHAT'D YOU SEE?
I...I SAW IT ON TV.
I KNOW I SAW IT... ONE OF THESE HOLES.
I ONLY CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF IT ON TV.
SO I CAME HERE TO MAKE SURE ABOUT IT.
BUT NOW THAT I'M HERE, THERE ARE SO MANY HOLES I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE IT IS...
SO WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THIS HOLE?
IT...
... WAS MY SHAPE.

IT WAS *BASED* ON ME. I SWEAR, I'M SERIOUS!

...THAT HOLE WAS MY SILHOUETTE!

IT WAS IDENTICAL... NO, IT WENT BEYOND THAT...

WHAT?

HOW COULD THEY HAVE BASED IT ON YOU? THAT'S KIND OF EGOTISTICAL, DON'T YOU THINK?

THESE HOLES ARE SUPPOSED TO BE THOUSANDS OF YEARS OLD.

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

SO, YOU TOO...

I KNEW IT WAS ME. IT DOESN'T HAVE TO MAKE SENSE!

I'M NOT JOKING! DON'T MAKE FUN OF ME!

I FELT THE SAME WAY. AFTER I SAW IT ON TV...
...I CAME HERE TO LOOK FOR MY HOLE.
MY NAME'S NAKAGAKI.
AND YOU'RE...
IT'S AN UNBELIEVABLE PHENOMENON. MOST OF US CAME HERE FOR THE EXACT SAME REASON.
WE'RE ALL LOOKING FOR OUR HOLES.
AND ...
...I FINALLY FOUND MINE.
THIS IS IT...
...SEE HOW PER-FECTLY I FIT?
HMM? YOU LOOK LIKE YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME.
WELL, I DON'T BLAME YOU.
HARVES

SHF

I'LL PROVE THIS IS MY HOLE RIGHT NOW.

JUST WATCH ME!

SHF

SLIP

SSLL

HEY ...

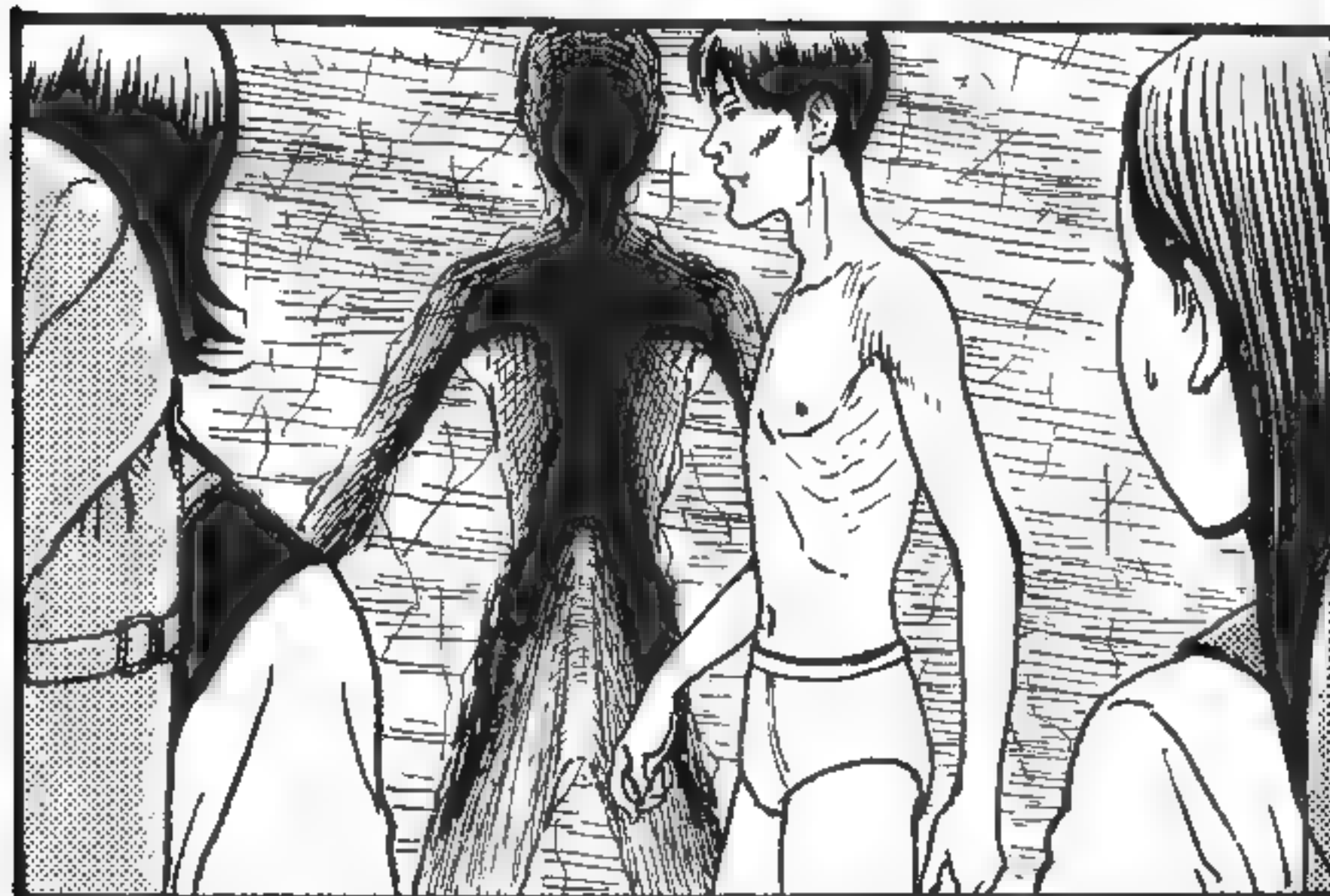
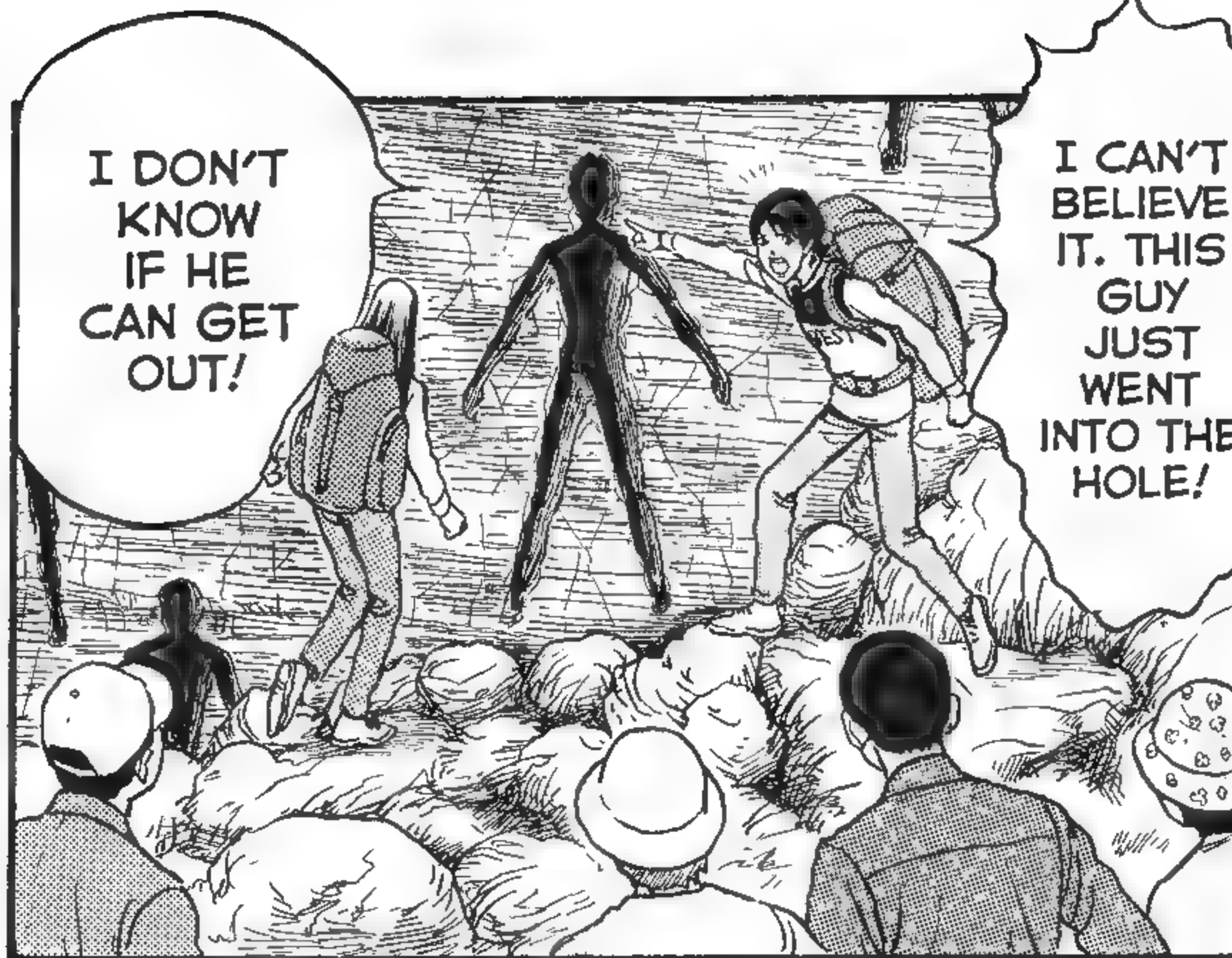
HEY... WHAT?!

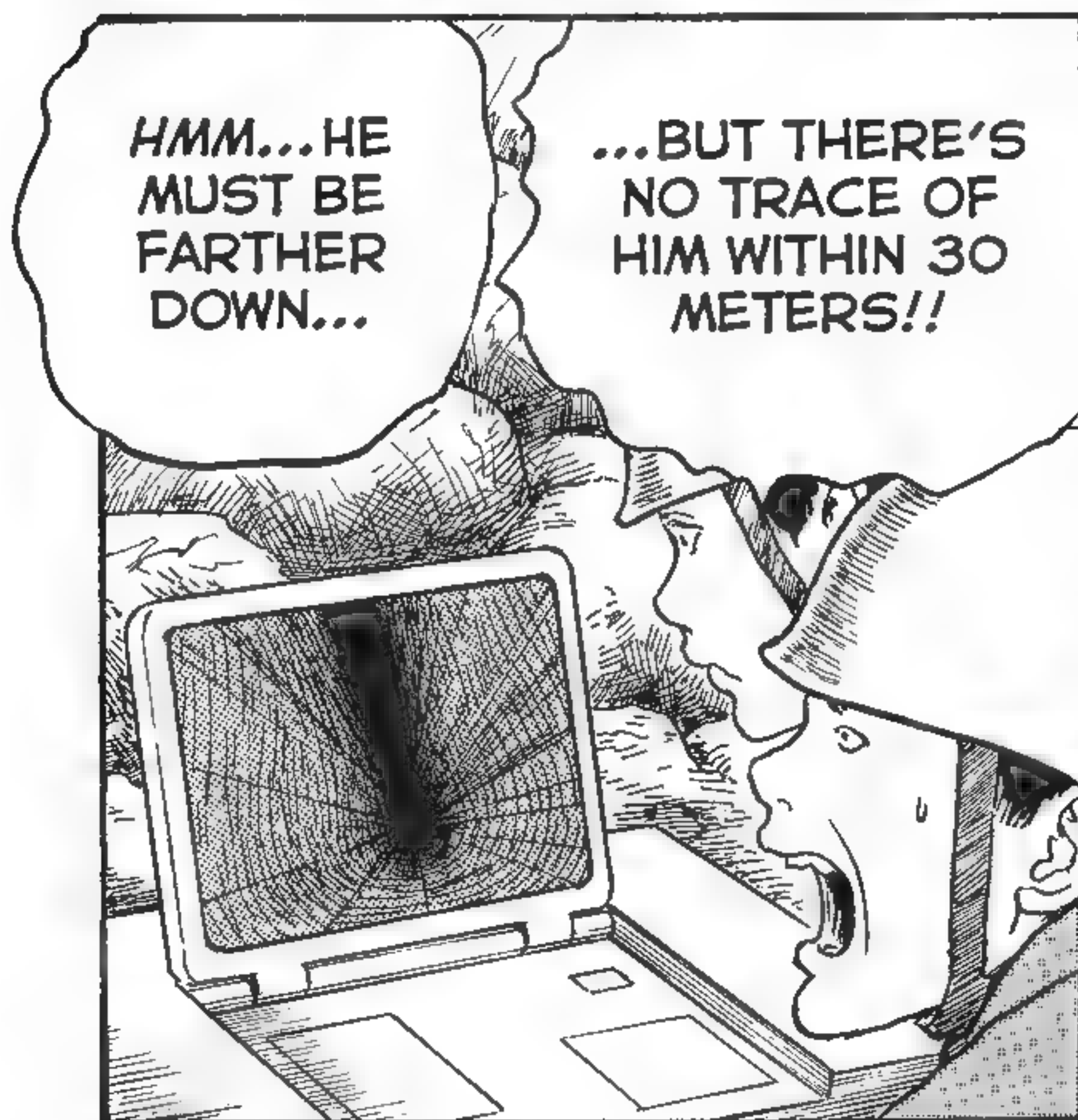
HEY, COME BACK HERE!!

THAT'S DANGER-OUS!!

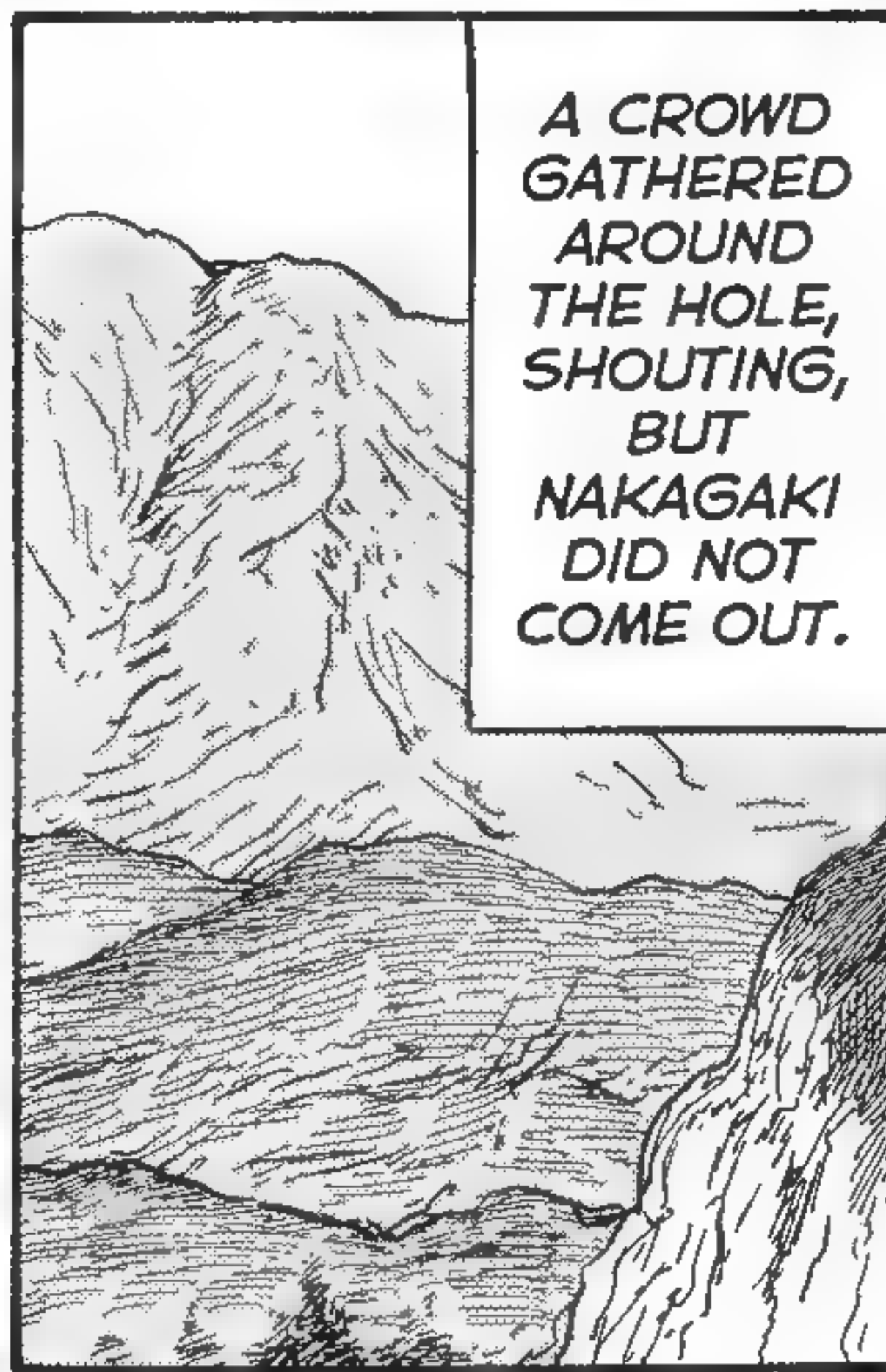
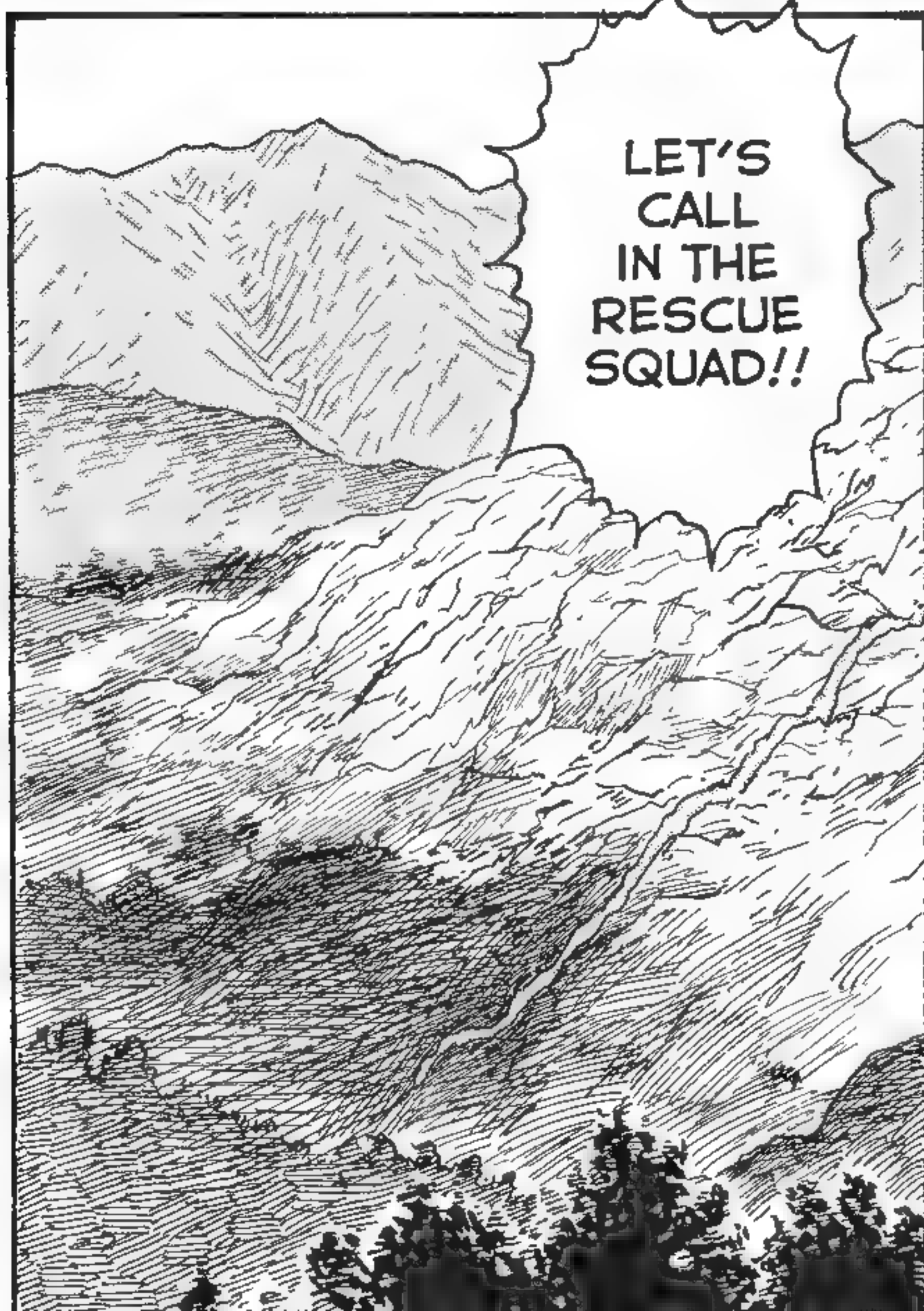
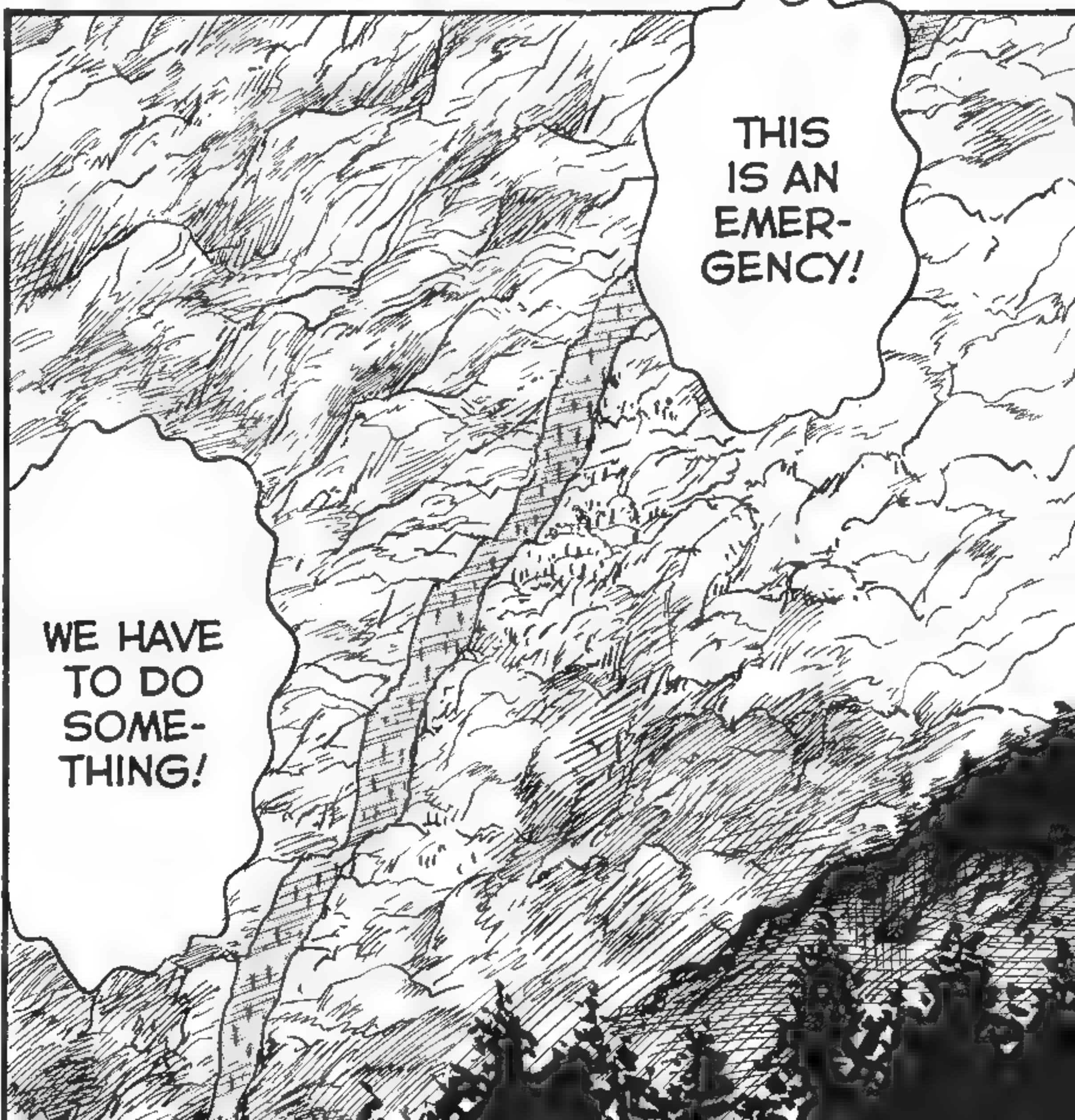
HEY!

OH MY GOD! HEY! COME BACK!

...

MUTTER MUTTER

I DON'T KNOW IF HE CAN GET OUT!

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. THIS GUY JUST WENT INTO THE HOLE!

HMM...HE MUST BE FARTHER DOWN...

...BUT THERE'S NO TRACE OF HIM WITHIN 30 METERS!!

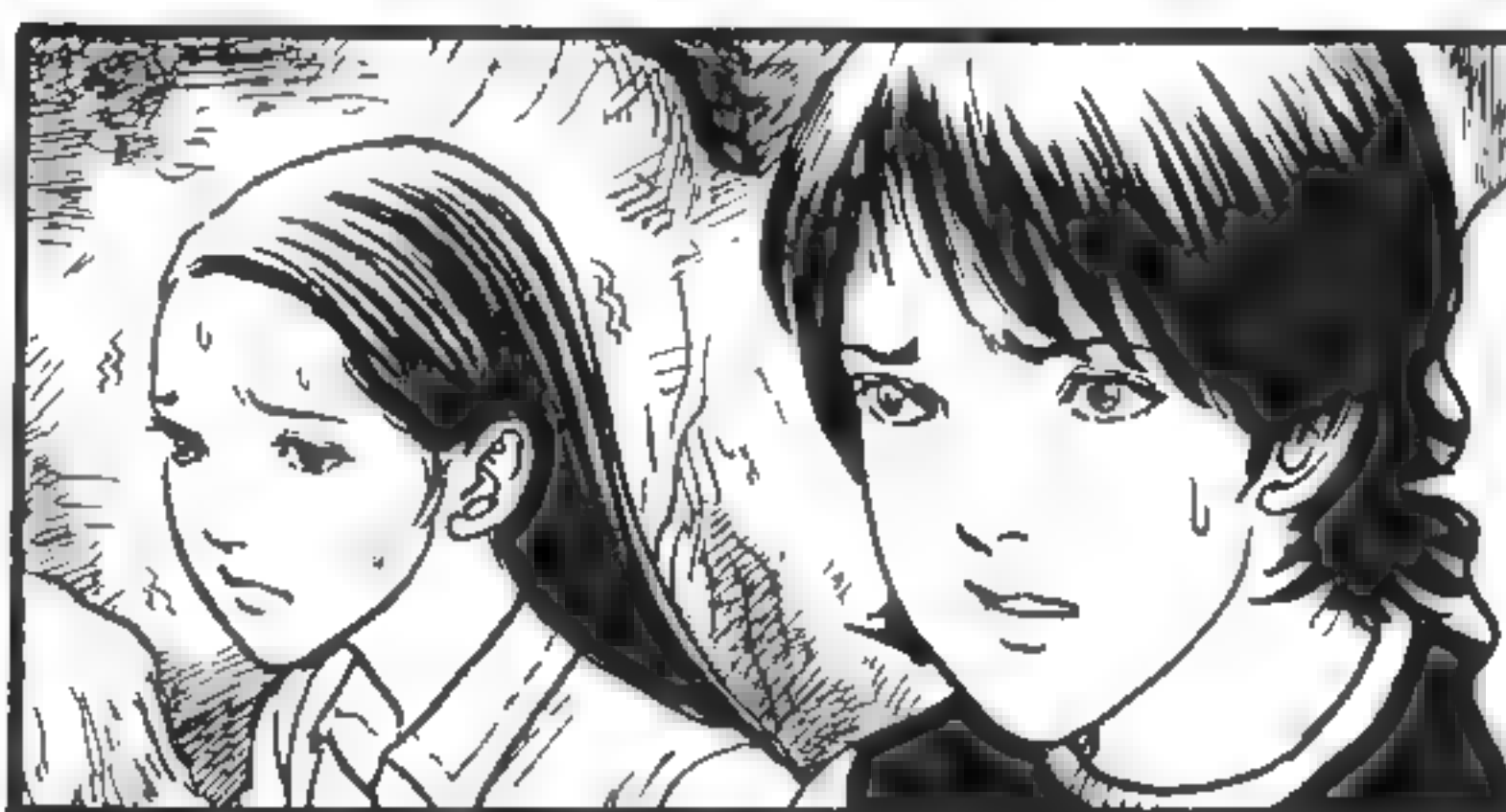
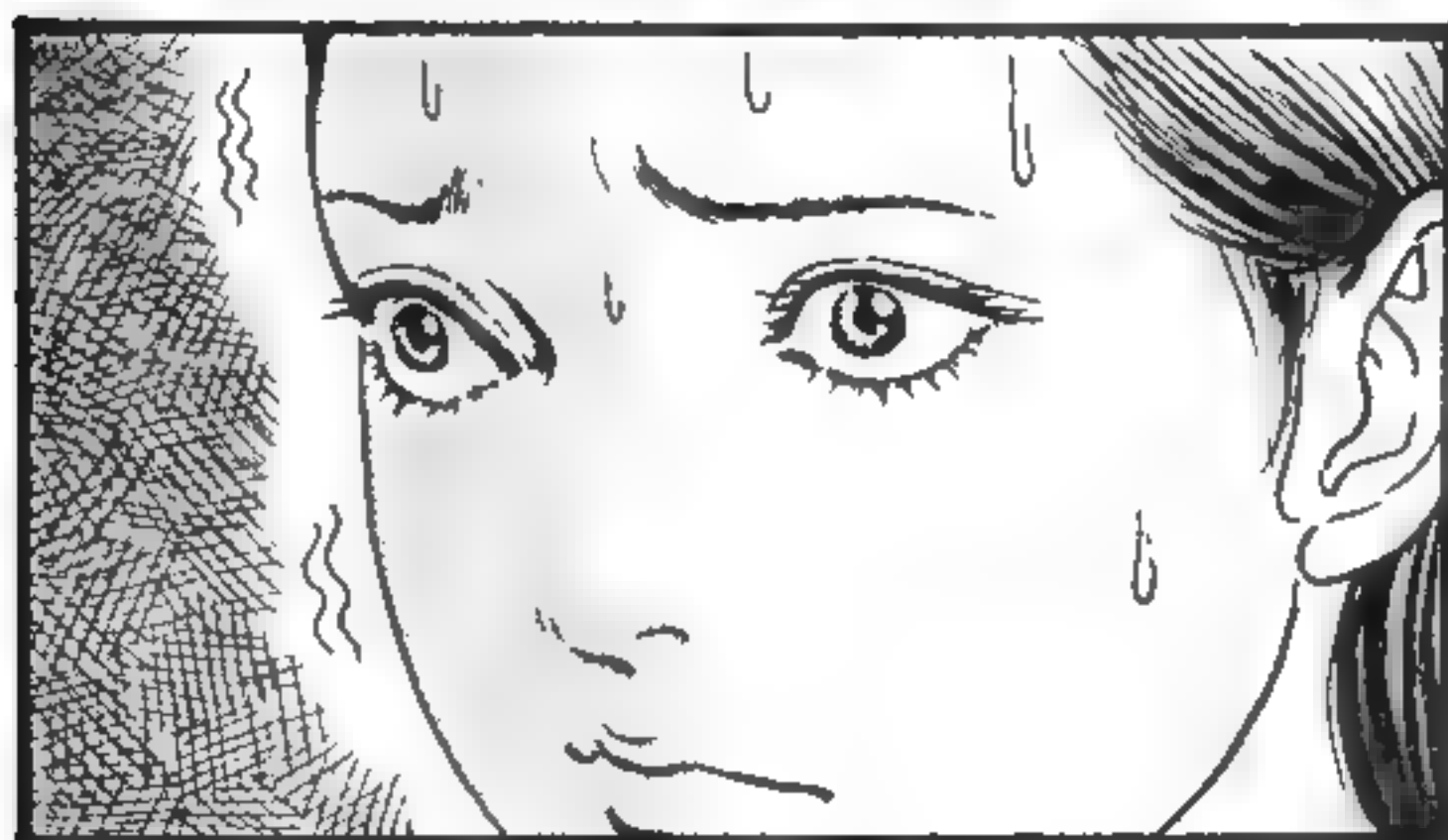
PROFESSOR, WE'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR HIM WITH THE FIBER SCOPE...

A CROWD GATHERED AROUND THE HOLE, SHOUTING, BUT NAKAGAKI DID NOT COME OUT.

LET'S CALL IN THE RESCUE SQUAD!!

THIS IS AN EMERGENCY!

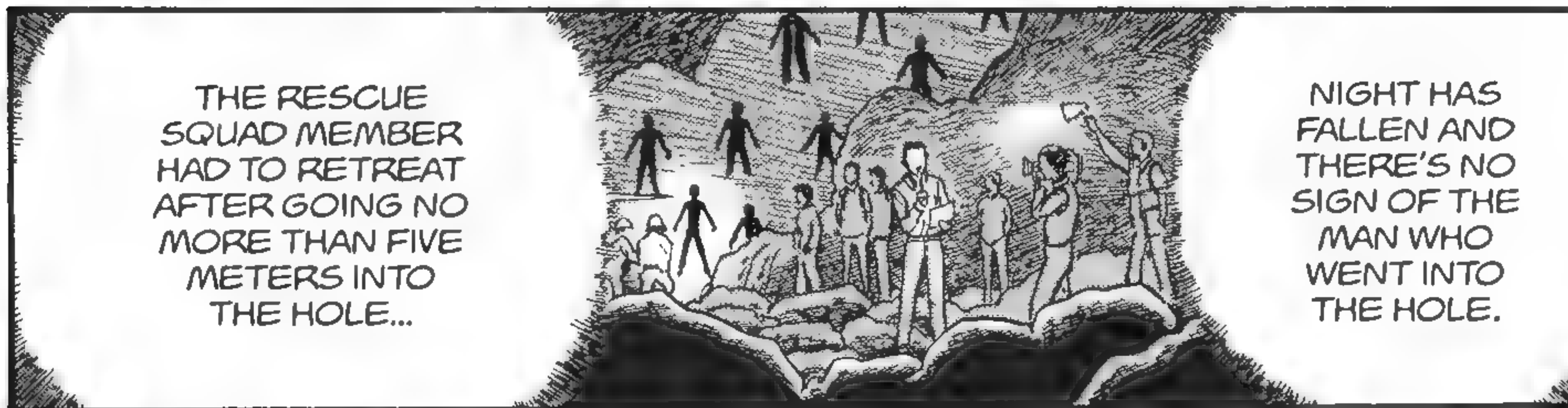
WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING!

WE NOW HAVE THIS UPDATE ON THE MAN WHO DISAPPEARED INTO ONE OF THE MYSTERIOUS HOLES...

OVER THREE HOURS HAVE ELAPSED SINCE HIS DISAPPEARANCE.

A RESCUE SQUAD IS ATTEMPTING TO ENTER THE HOLE.

ONE OF THEIR MEMBERS, 5'2" TALL, IS TRYING TO GO IN...

HE MUST HAVE BEEN CRAZY TO GO IN THERE!

NIGHT HAS FALLEN AND THERE'S NO SIGN OF THE MAN WHO WENT INTO THE HOLE.

THE RESCUE SQUAD MEMBER HAD TO RETREAT AFTER GOING NO MORE THAN FIVE METERS INTO THE HOLE...

THAT NIGHT I HAD A NIGHTMARE.

IN MY DREAM, I WAS NAKAGAKI.

I WAS COMPLETELY TRAPPED IN PITCH BLACKNESS, HUNDREDS OF METERS INTO THE HOLE.

AGGH... GGH...

I-I CAN'T MOVE...

I'M STUCK...

THE EARTHQUAKE. THE HOLE MUST HAVE BEEN DEFORMED BY THE EARTHQUAKE. SO I CAN'T MOVE...

S-SOMEONE!

ANYONE! HELP ME!

HAAH HAAH ...
...IT'S MORNING... IT WAS A NIGHTMARE ...
AAGGH!
I'LL GO FIND OUT...
IS HE STILL DOWN THERE, WRITHING NAKED IN THAT HOLE?
OR MAYBE HE GOT RESCUED...
YOU'RE UP ALREADY?
DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO NAKAGAKI ?
...
HE'S STILL GONE.

NEVER MIND... OWAKI, CAN YOU COME WITH ME?
I NEED TO SHOW YOU SOME-THING.
WHAT IS IT?
I FOUND IT.
I FOUND MY HOLE.
IT TURNED OUT IT WAS FARTHER DOWN AT THE FOOT OF THE FAULT.
NO WONDER I COULDN'T FIND IT.
THIS IS IT...
WELL, IT DOES LOOK KIND OF LIKE YOU...
IT'S IDEN-TICAL TO ME.

WHY ARE YOU SHAKING?
YOSHIDA, WHAT IS IT?
THIS IS MY TUNNEL... THEY DUG IT FOR ME...
I'M SCARED... I'M SO SCARED...
THIS IS MY TUNNEL!
NO ...
IT JUST HAPPENS TO LOOK A LITTLE LIKE YOU!
IT'S JUST A COINCIDENCE !!
...I'LL BE TRAPPED IN THIS HOLE!
AND WHEN I GO IN...
IT'S BEEN WAITING FOR ME TO ENTER, ALL THAT TIME WHEN IT WAS UNDERGROUND!
IT WAS MADE... MADE FOR ME TO ENTER!

HEY ...

IT HAS BEEN A FULL DAY SINCE THE MAN WHO WALKED INTO THE HOLE...

...DISAP-PEARED. HE HAS VANISHED WITHOUT A TRACE.

HEY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! GET DOWN HERE BEFORE YOU HURT YOURSELF!!

LOOK OVER THERE!

WHAT'S THAT KID DOING?

TH-THIS IS MY HOLE!

IT WAS MADE FOR ME!

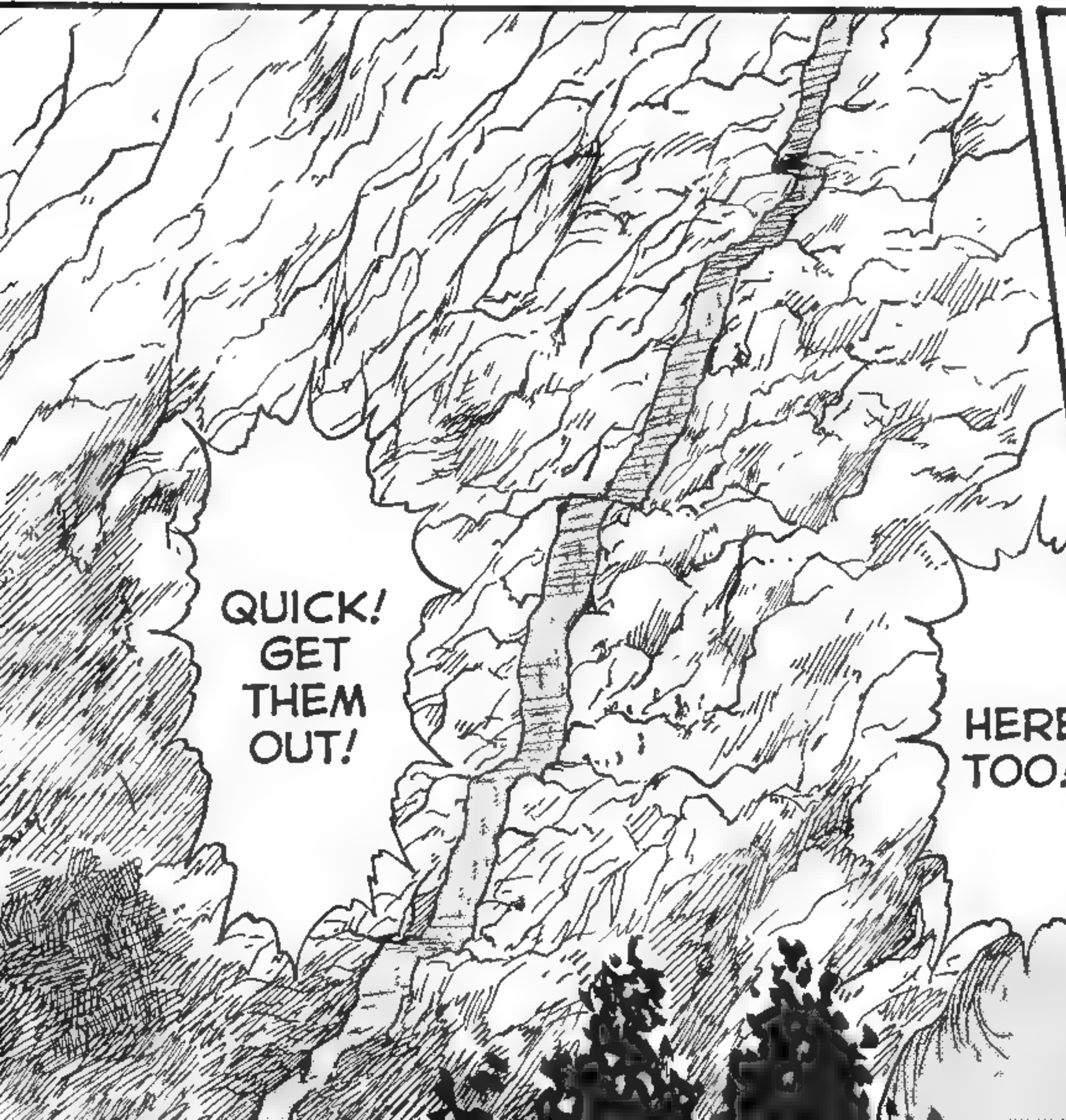
I HAVE TO GO IN!

GOOD-BYE!

H-HEY!!

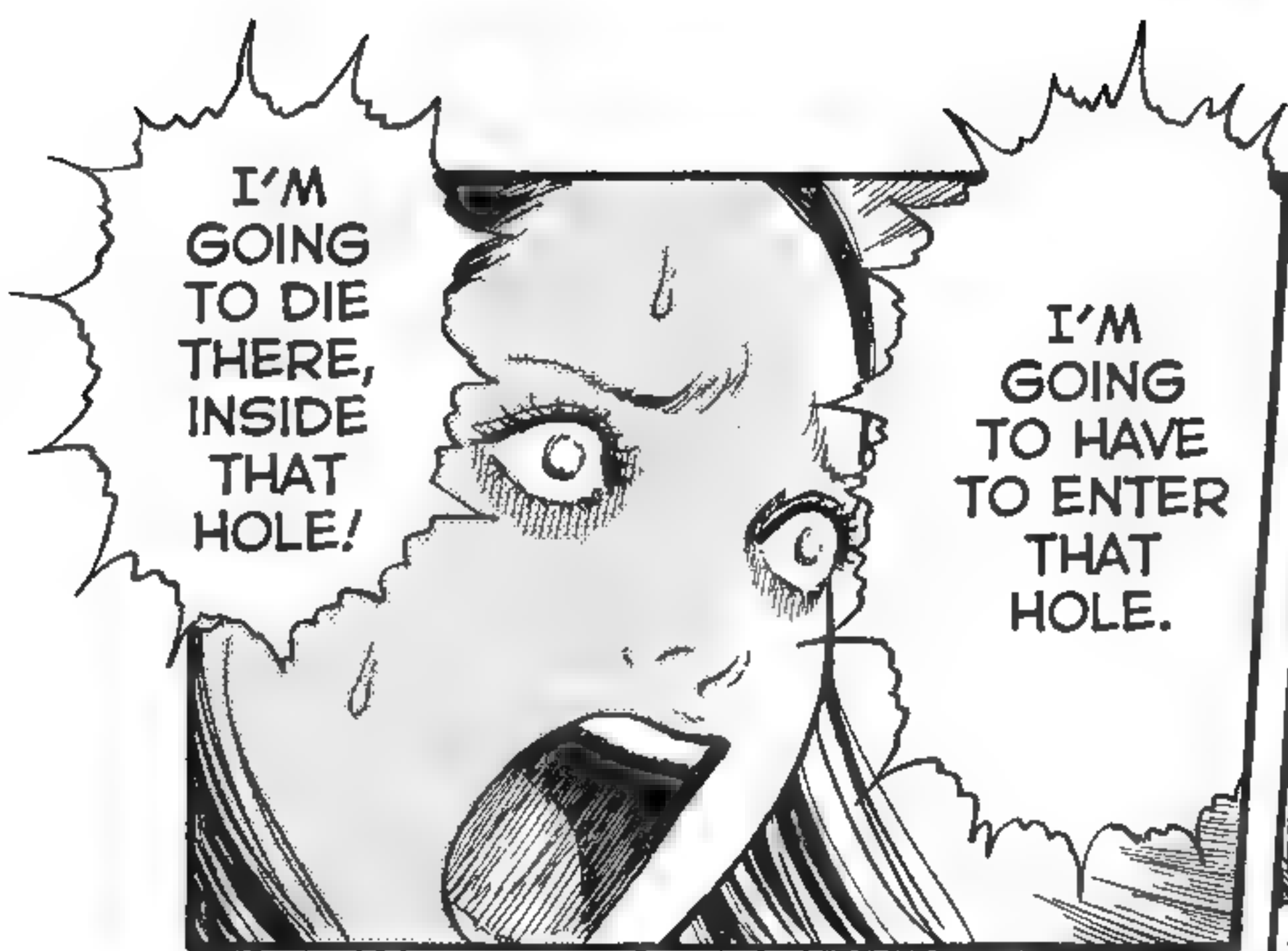
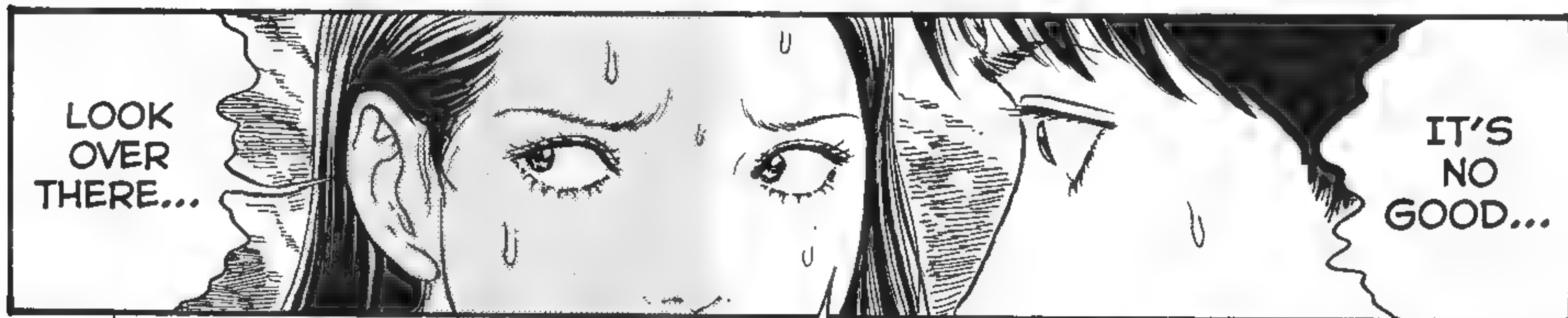
S-STOP!! SOMEBODY STOP HIM!

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!! OTHERS MIGHT FOLLOW HIM NOW...

...AND ENTER THE HOLES...!!

OH, NO!!

LOOK OVER HERE!! SOMEONE ELSE JUST WENT IN!

HERE, TOO!!

QUICK! GET THEM OUT!

NO... NO! I'M SCARED!
YOSHIDA?!
I'M GOING TO HAVE TO ENTER THAT HOLE.
I'M GOING TO DIE THERE, INSIDE THAT HOLE!
DON'T WORRY!
YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT!
IT'S NO GOOD...
LOOK OVER THERE...
IT'S JUST GAPING AT ME!!
MY SIL-HOUETTE'S SAYING, "COME IN."
"COME INTO ME."
THAT'S WHAT IT'S SAYING.

OH GOD! OH GOD I'M SCARED!
GET AHOLD OF YOUR-SELF!
ALL RIGHT, IF YOU'RE SO SCARED...
I'LL HELP YOU.
I'LL FILL THIS HOLE UP!
JUST WATCH ME!!
CLATTA
CLATTA
...
THERE... SEE?
NOW YOU'RE SAFE.

DON'T YOU HAVE TO GO BACK TO YOUR TENT?

...MY PARENTS DIDN'T CARE ABOUT ME... NEITHER DID MY FRIENDS...

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ALONE... EVER SINCE I WAS A CHILD...

DON'T WORRY, I'M HERE WITH YOU.

I'M TOO SCARED TO BE ALONE.

NO...

REALLY?

YOU HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, THOUGH, NOW THAT I'M WITH YOU.

NOTHING COULD BE LONELIER THAN THAT HOLE.

DO YOU SEE, YOSHIDA? YOU'RE AFRAID OF THAT HOLE BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN LONELY.

YES.

THAT NIGHT I HAD ANOTHER NIGHTMARE.

IT WAS ANOTHER TIME... I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG AGO.

I HAD COMMITTED A HORRIBLE CRIME, AND I WAS ABOUT TO BE PUNISHED.

SHNK

ACTUALLY, IT WAS MORE LIKE A DEATH SENTENCE.

ALONG THE CLIFF WALL WERE COUNTLESS HOLES FOR CRIMINALS EXECUTED IN THE PAST.

HWOOOOOOOOOOOOoo

WHEN A PERSON COMMITTED A CRIME OF MY MAGNITUDE, THE PEOPLE IN THE PAST WOULD DIG HUMAN-SHAPED HOLES...

I WAS ABOUT TO ENTER THIS HOLE.

...I WAS SLIDING SLOWLY, SLOWLY DOWN... MOVING FORWARD WITH EACH MOVEMENT I MADE.

THE WALLS WERE CARVED IN A WAY THAT KEPT YOU FROM RETREAT-ING...

I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO MOVE FORWARD, INTO THE CLAUSTRO-PHOBIA ALL AROUND.

I FELT THE COLD STONE ON ALL SIDES AROUND ME.

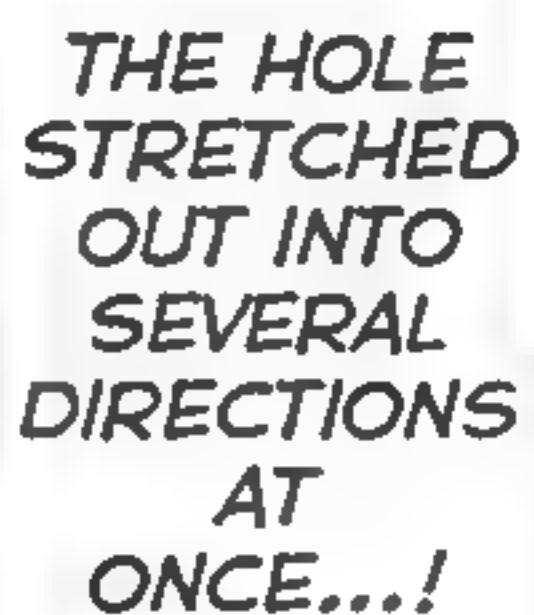
I FELT A TUG ON MY NECK.

AND WITH TIME ...

TO MY HORROR, THE PART CORRE-SPONDING TO MY NECK ONLY GOT LONGER AND LONGER...

URR...

... STRETCHING IT UNTIL IT SHOULD HAVE TORN OFF.

UNHH... UNHH ...!!

GYAAGHH!

SOME-ONE! ANY-ONE! HELP ME!

THE HOLE STRETCHED OUT INTO SEVERAL DIRECTIONS AT ONCE...!

NO...NOT JUST MY NECK... MY ARMS, LEGS AND TORSO...

HUH?!

ANOTHER NIGHT-MARE...

GASP... GASP...

AAAGH!

WHERE DID SHE GO?

N- NO...

HARVEST

SHE CAN'T HAVE GONE FAR IN THE DARK.

SHE TOOK THEM OUT!
SHE WENT IN THE HOLE!!
AH ...?!
THE ROCKS ...
...
COME BACK!!
HEY YOSHIDA!
WHY ...
WHY'D YOU DO IT?!
DAMMIT ...WHY...

SLIP
BONK
BONK
BONK
BONK

THIS IS MY HOLE...
...
TH...
THIS IS...

SEVERAL MONTHS LATER...

PROFESSOR... HERE IT IS!

JUST AS THAT CLIMBER INFORMED US.

SO THERE WAS A FAULT ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN!!

HMM... I'M SURE THIS WAS FORMED BY THE EARTHQUAKE AS WELL.

BUT UNLIKE THE ONE ON THE OTHER SIDE, THIS ONE'S QUITE SMALL.

THERE ARE HOLES, BUT THEY'RE NOT HUMAN SHAPED...

THEY DON'T REALLY HAVE ANY FORM...

AHA!

TAKE A LOOK AT THIS!

I WONDER IF THEY'RE CONNECTED TO THE ONES OVER THERE.
I'M GOING TO TAKE A LOOK.
...
UHH...
YAAAAHH!
S-SIR!!
I-I SEE SOME-THING!!
IT'S SLOWLY COMING THIS WAY!!
DRR... DRR... DRR...

THE SAD TALE OF THE PRINCIPAL POST

SO YOU FINALLY FINISHED YOUR NEW HOUSE! THANKS FOR INVITING US OVER!

IT'S SO NICE. I'M REALLY JEALOUS!

MORE SAKE, ANY-ONE?

WHERE'S THE MAN OF THE HOUSE, ANYWAY?

FUNNY, HE WAS HERE JUST A MOMENT AGO...

SOME-ONE HELP ME!

H-H-HELP!

THAT SOUNDS LIKE DAD!

DEAR?

HELLLP!

WHAT IS IT? WHERE ARE YOU?!

HELLLP!

I'M DOWN HERE!

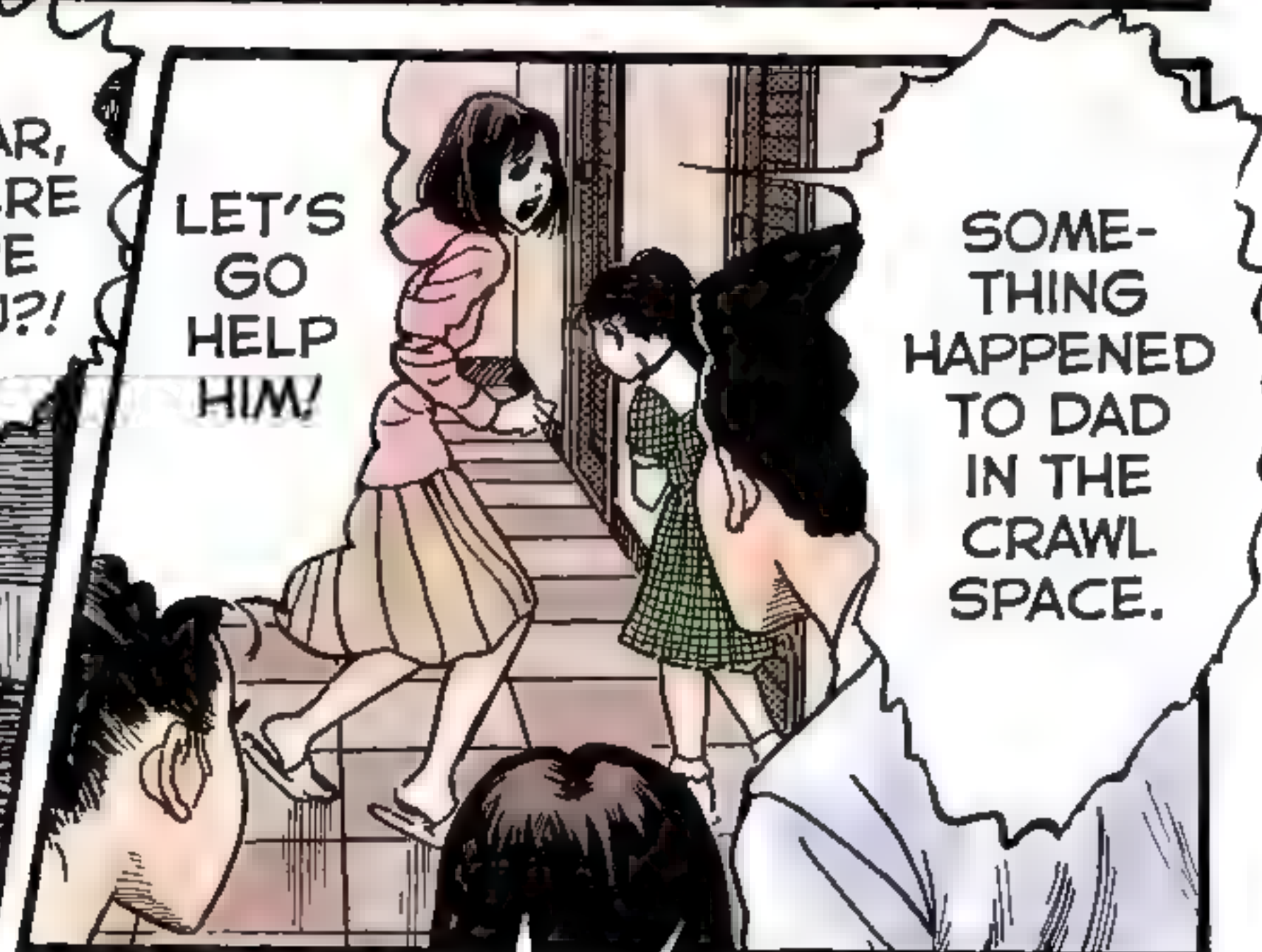
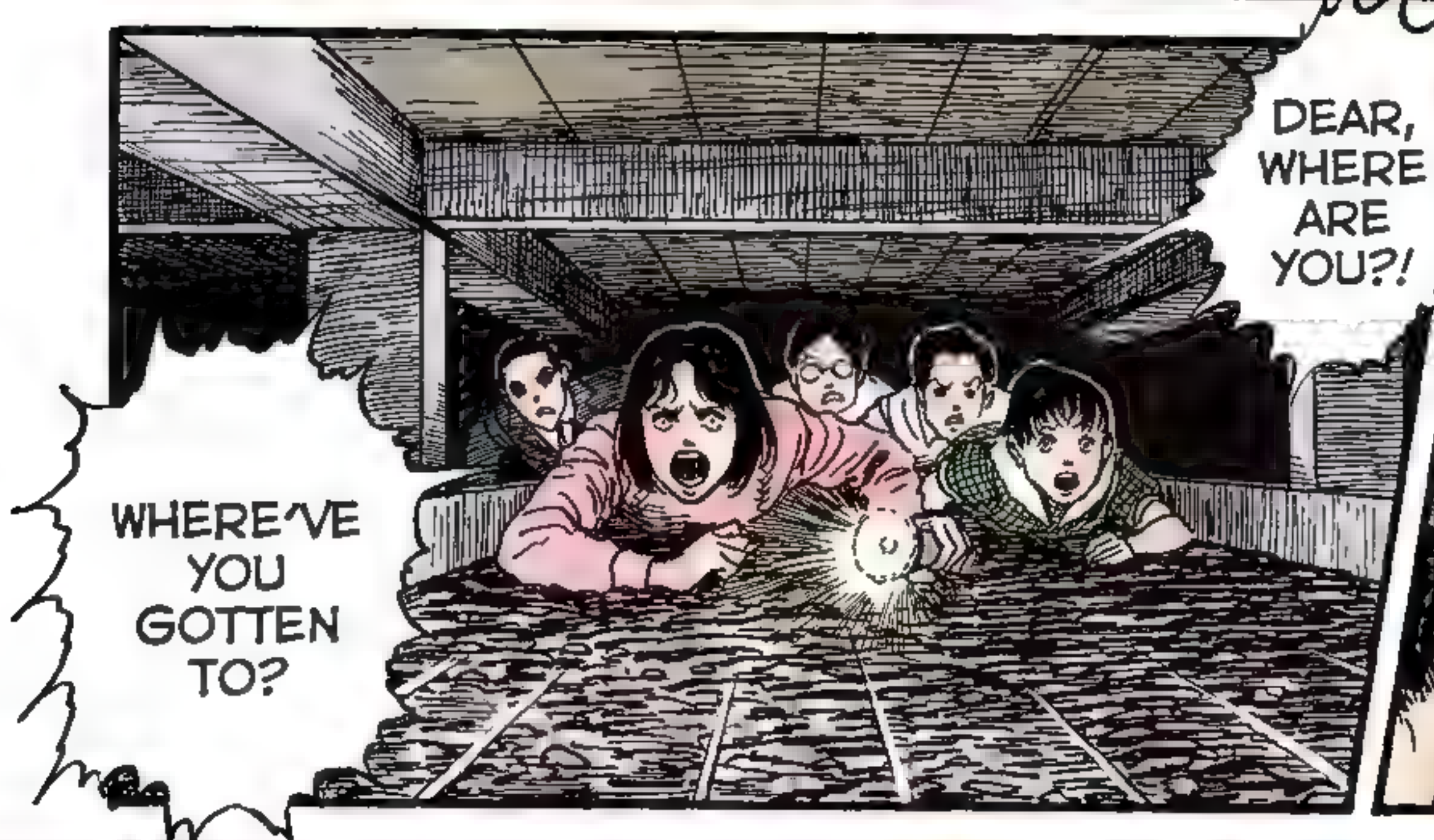
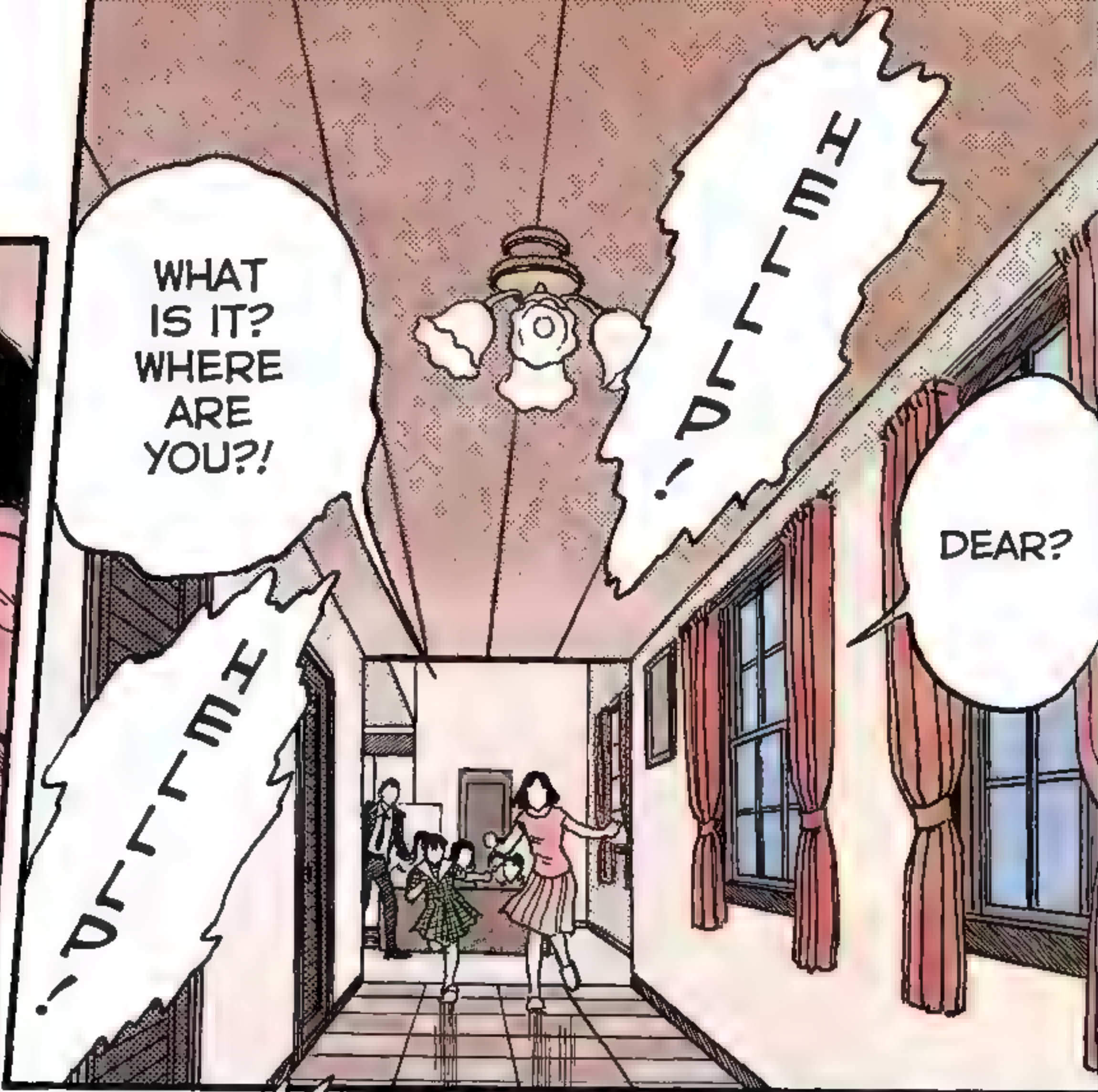
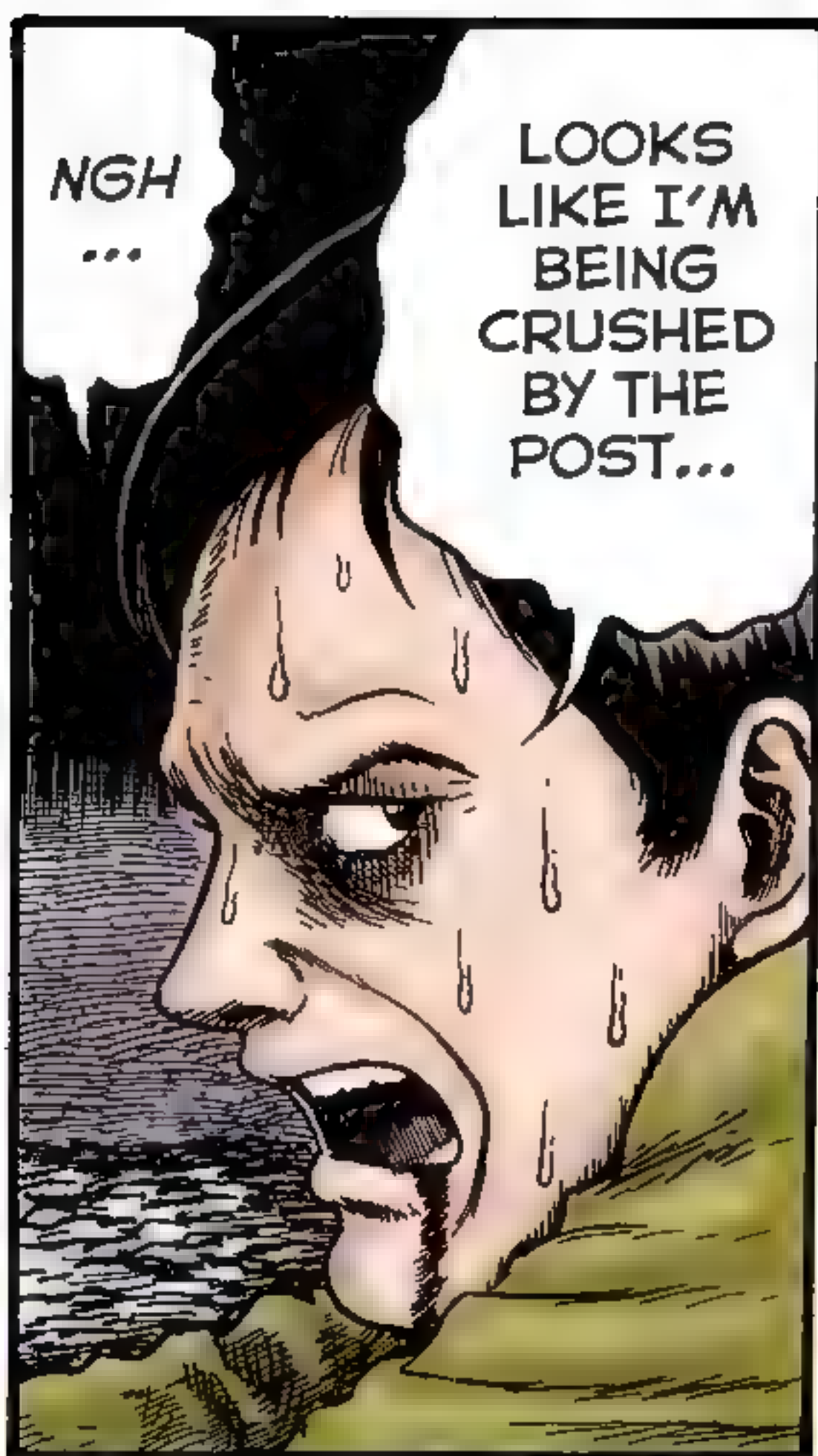
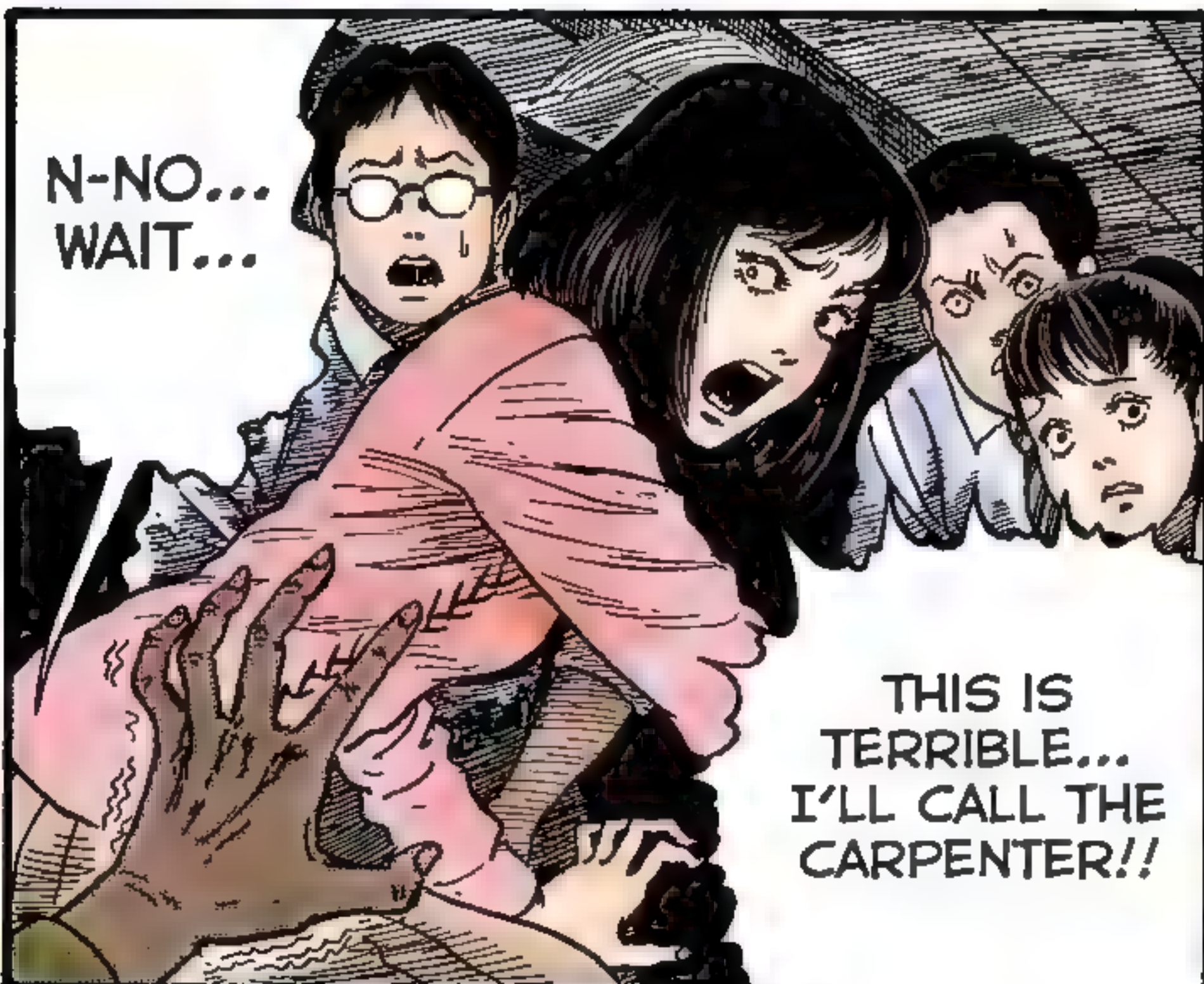
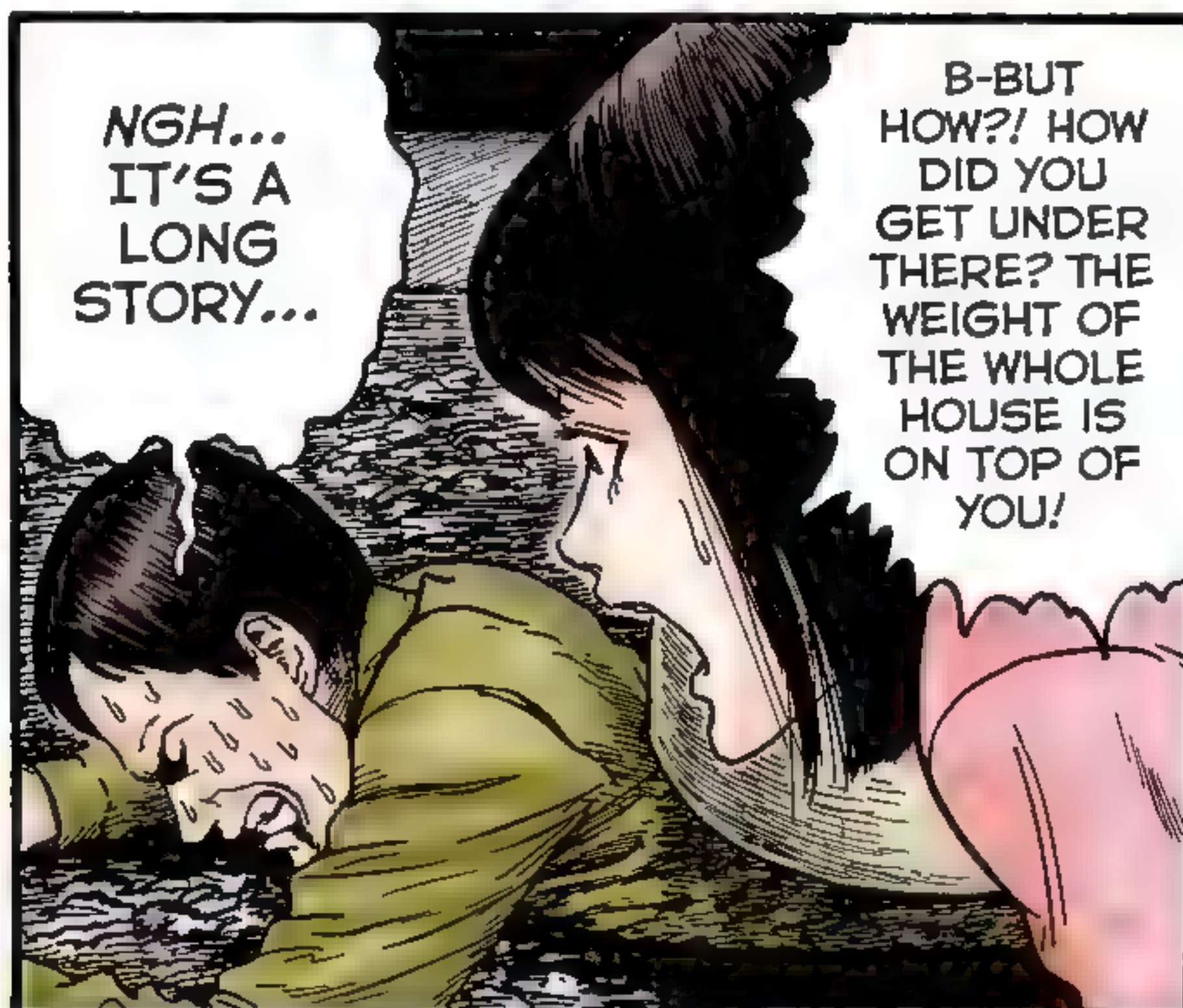
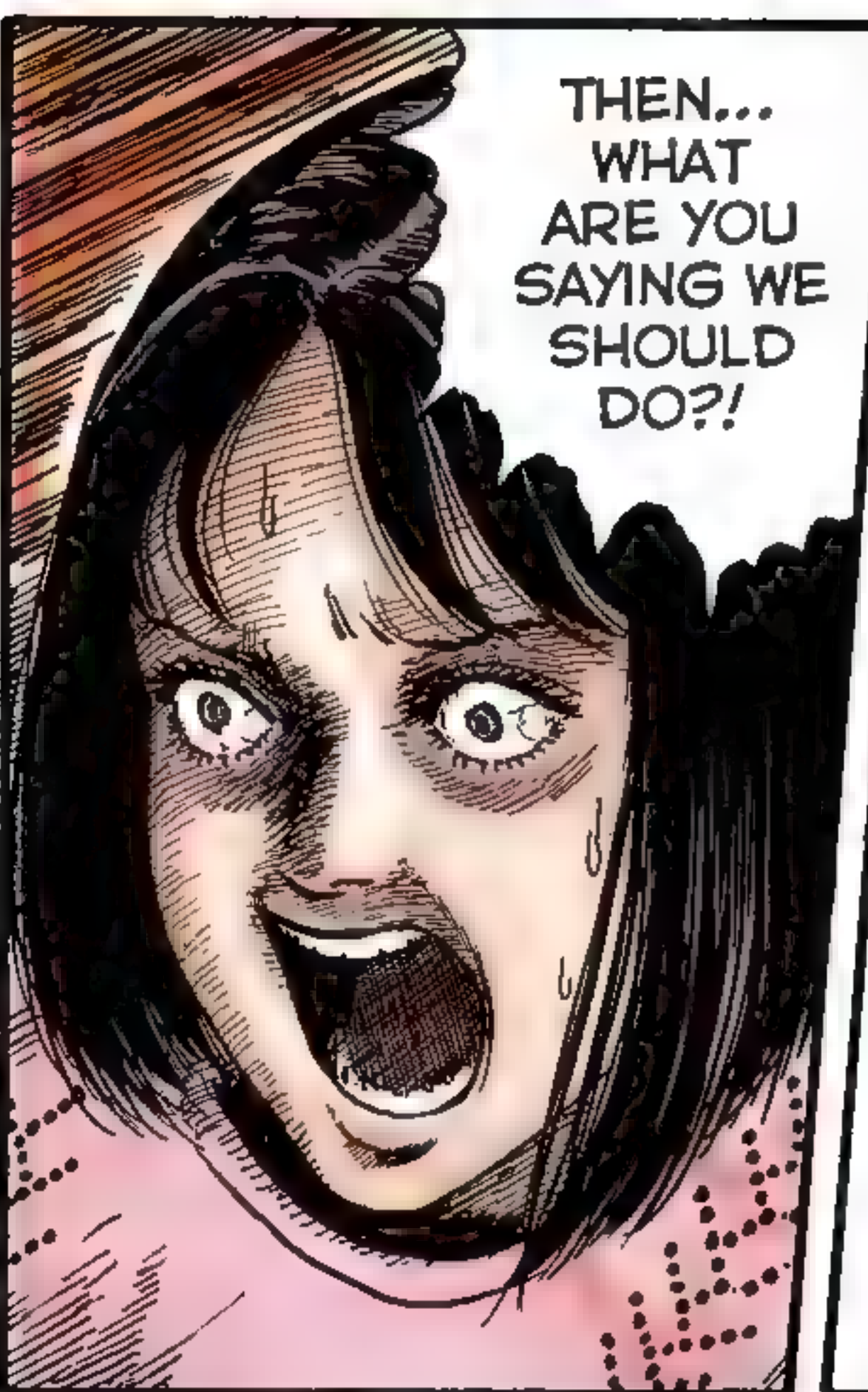
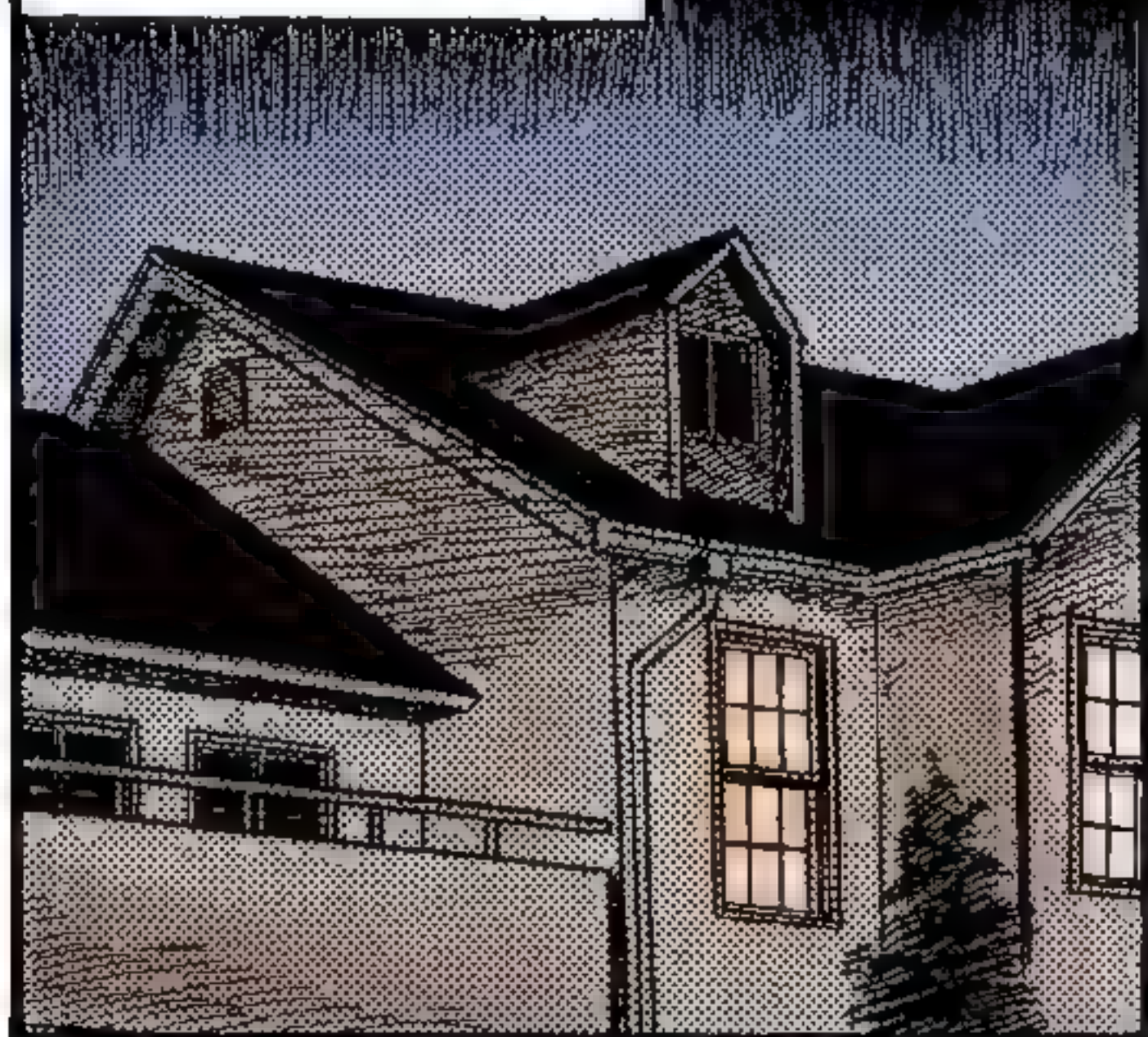
I'M IN THE CRAWL SPACE! HELP ME...

SOME-THING HAPPENED TO DAD IN THE CRAWL SPACE.

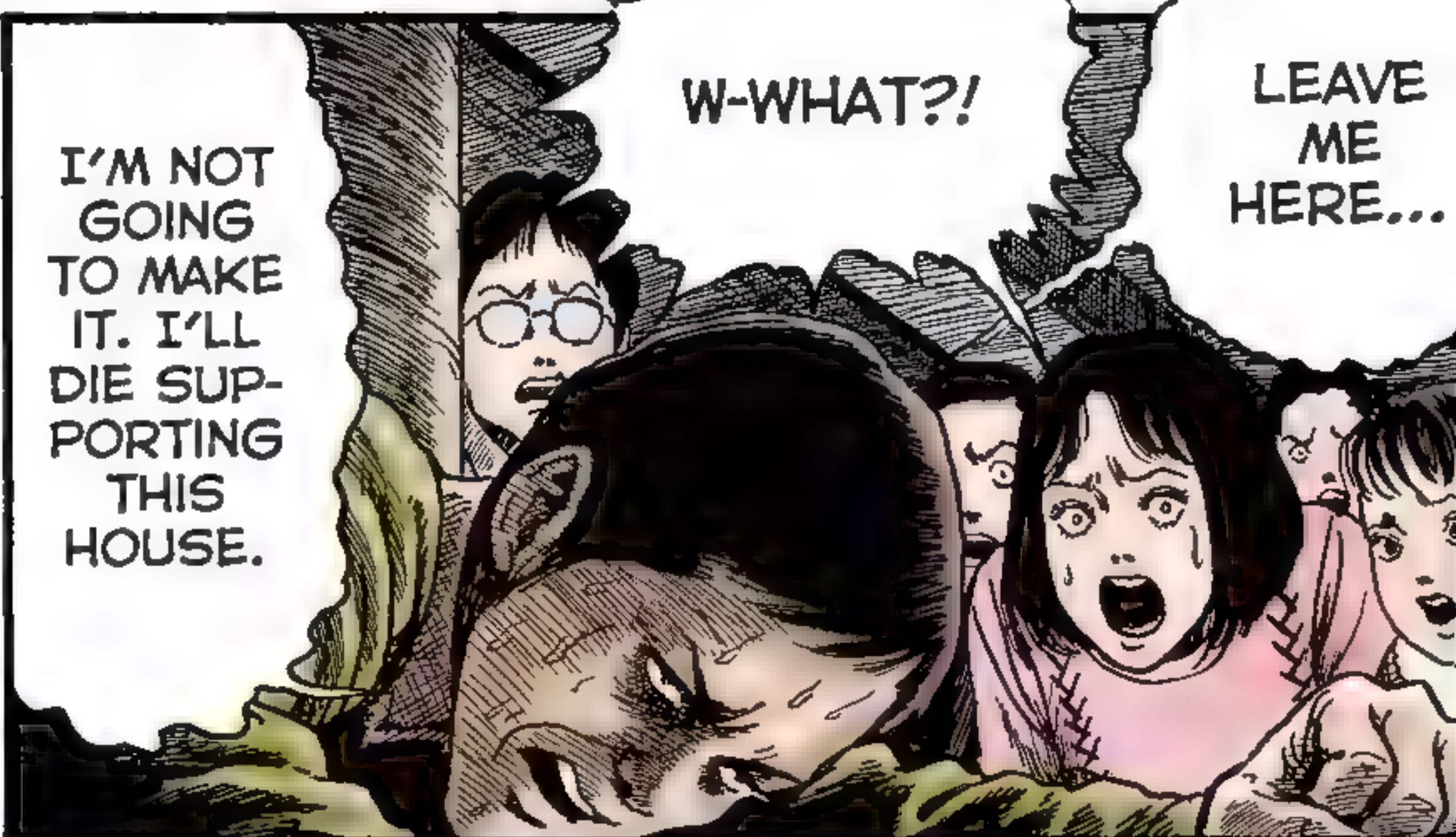
LET'S GO HELP HIM!

DEAR, WHERE ARE YOU?!

WHERE'VE YOU GOTTEN TO?

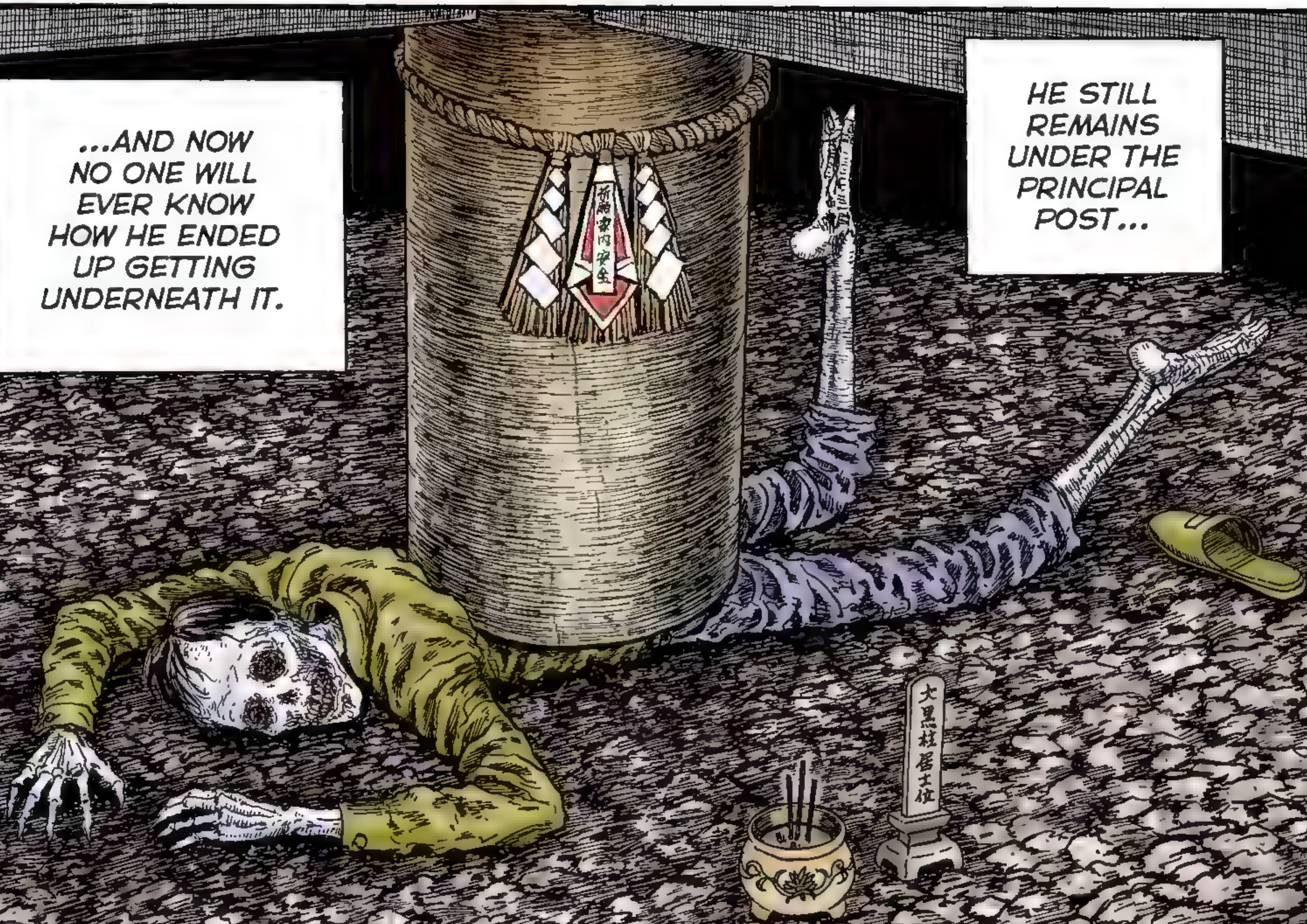
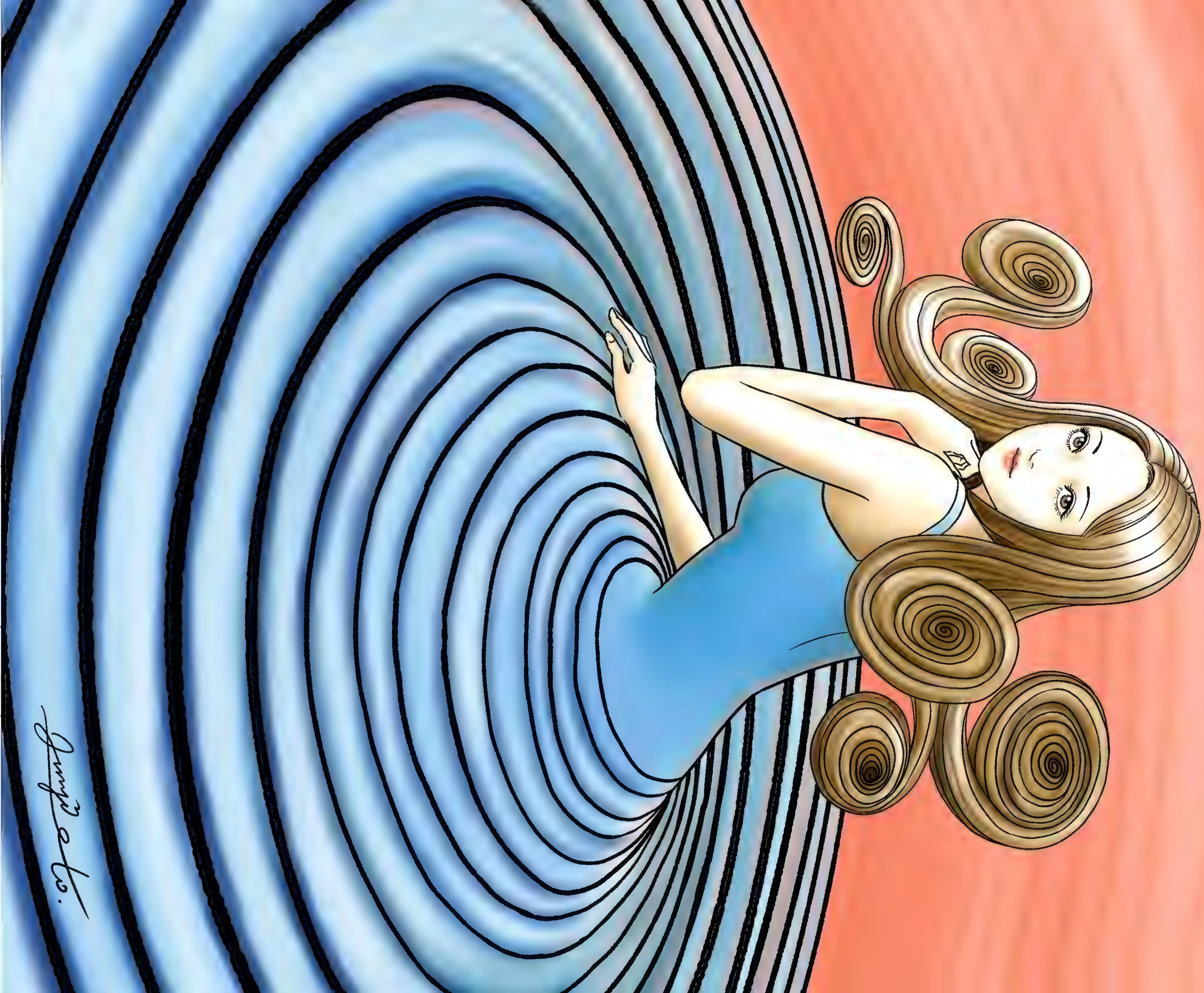
AH!

NGH ...
LOOKS LIKE I'M BEING CRUSHED BY THE POST...
D-DEAR... WHAT IN THE WORLD HAPPENED ?!
N-NO... WAIT...
THIS IS TERRIBLE... I'LL CALL THE CARPENTER!!
NGH... IT'S A LONG STORY...
B-BUT HOW?! HOW DID YOU GET UNDER THERE? THE WEIGHT OF THE WHOLE HOUSE IS ON TOP OF YOU!
THEN... WHAT ARE YOU SAYING WE SHOULD DO?!
TH-THIS LOOKS LIKE THE PRINCIPAL POST...
IF YOU MOVE IT JUST TO RESCUE ME, THE ENTIRE HOUSE MIGHT FALL OVER.
I MEAN, WHAT A SHAME! OUR BRAND-NEW HOUSE !

AS HIS WIFE, DAUGHTER AND FRIENDS WATCHED OVER HIM, HE PASSED AWAY LATER THAT EVENING.

I'M NOT GOING TO MAKE IT. I'LL DIE SUP-PORTING THIS HOUSE.

W-WHAT?!

LEAVE ME HERE...

DEAR ...

DADDY, NO!

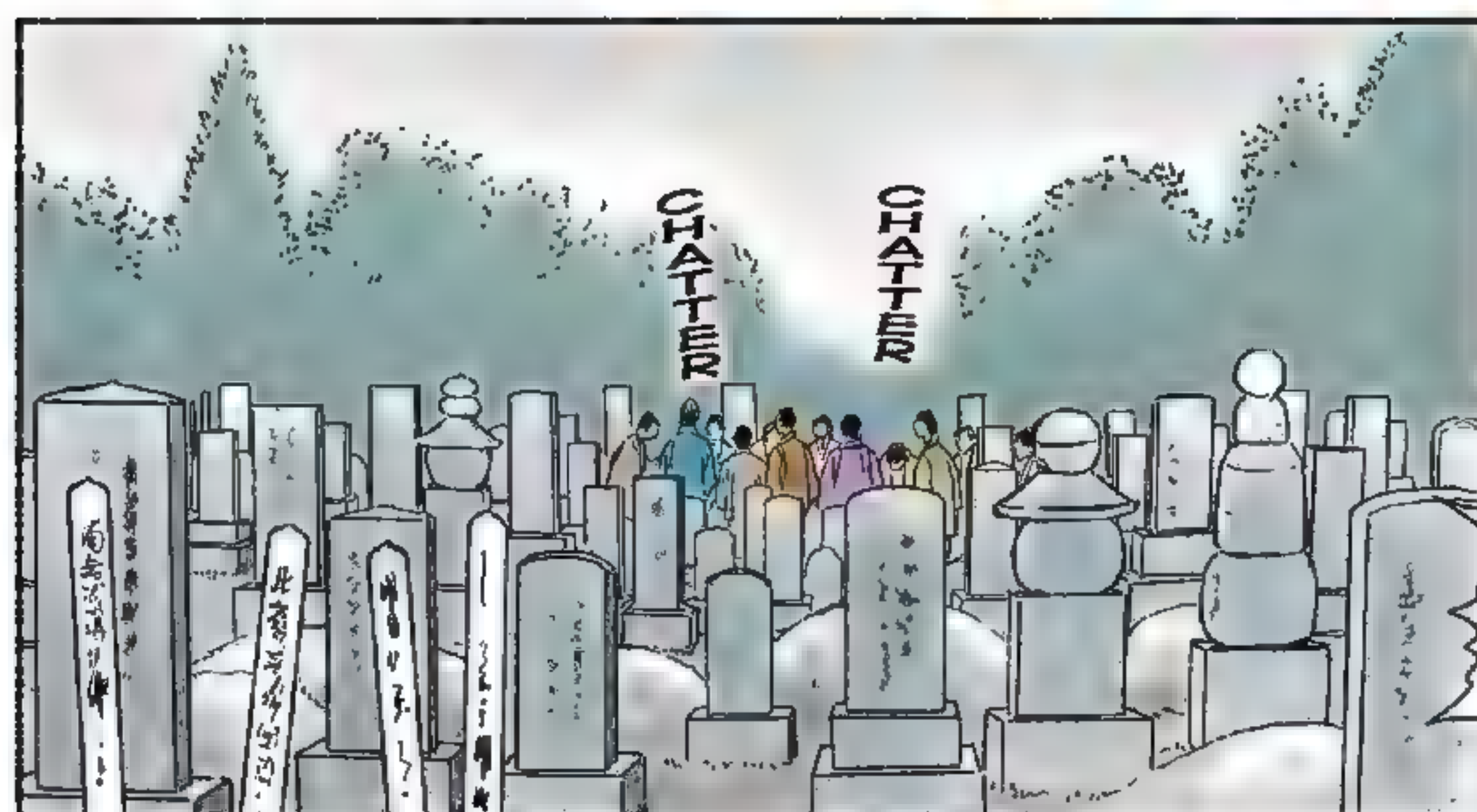
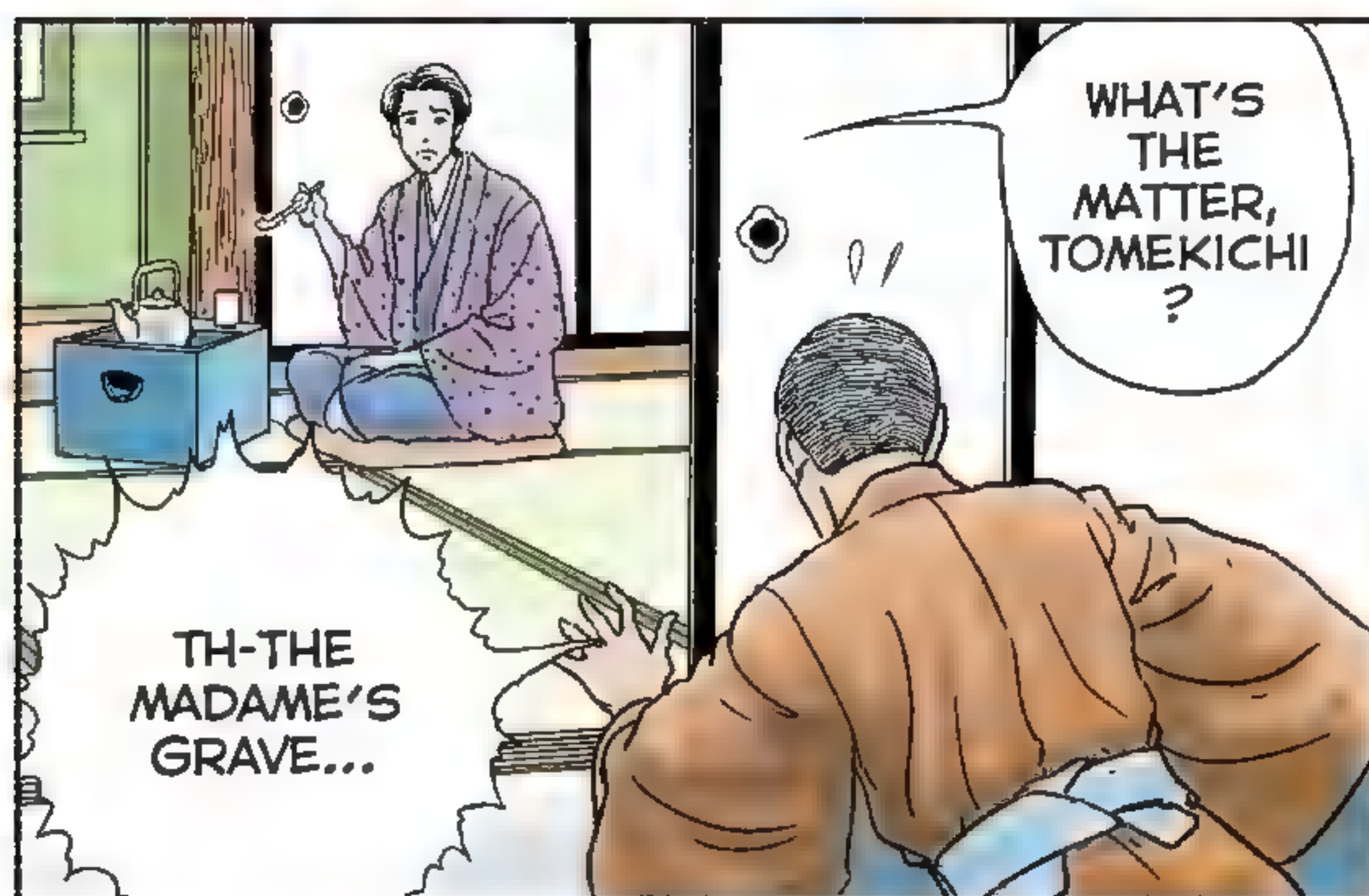
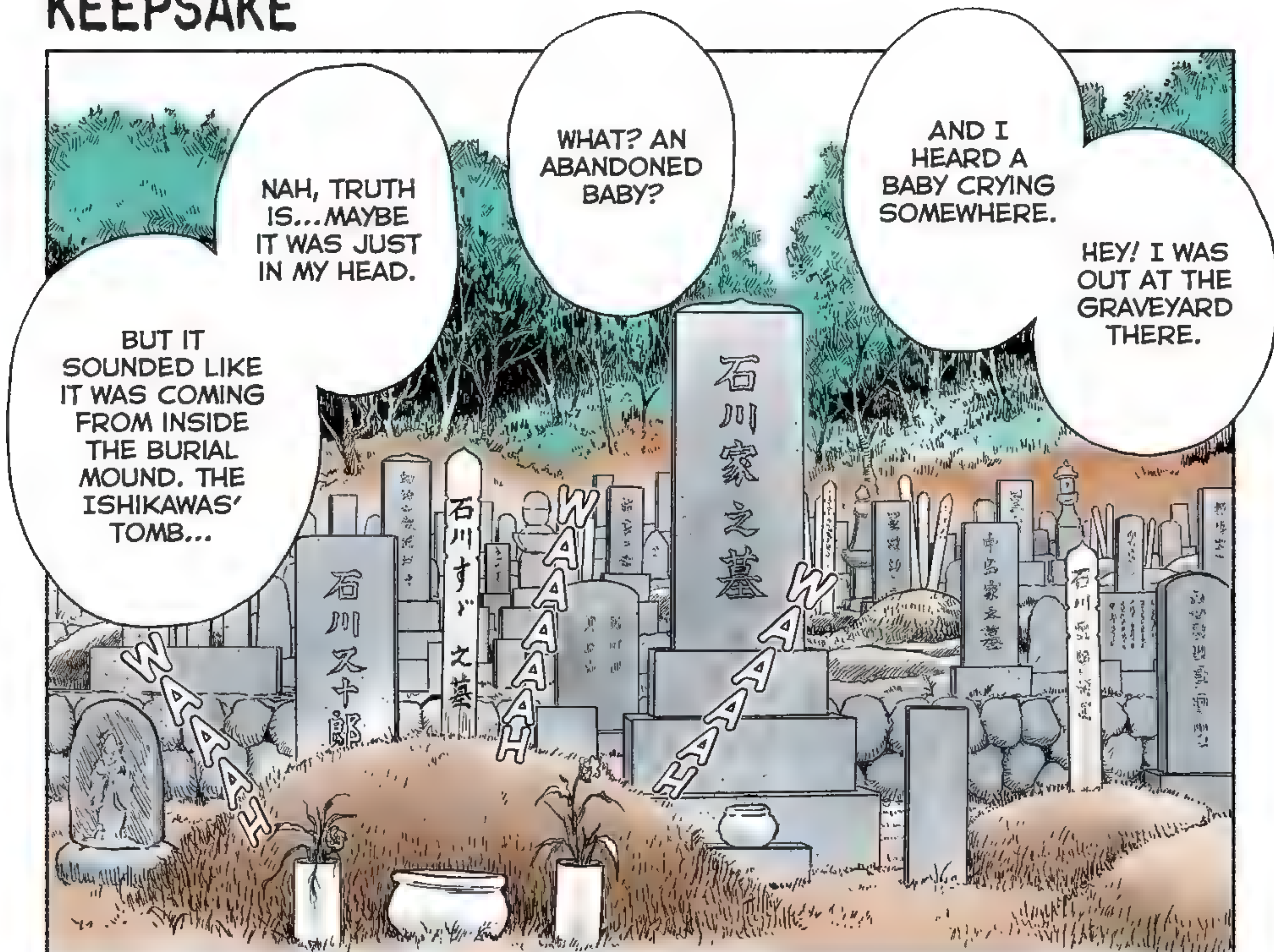
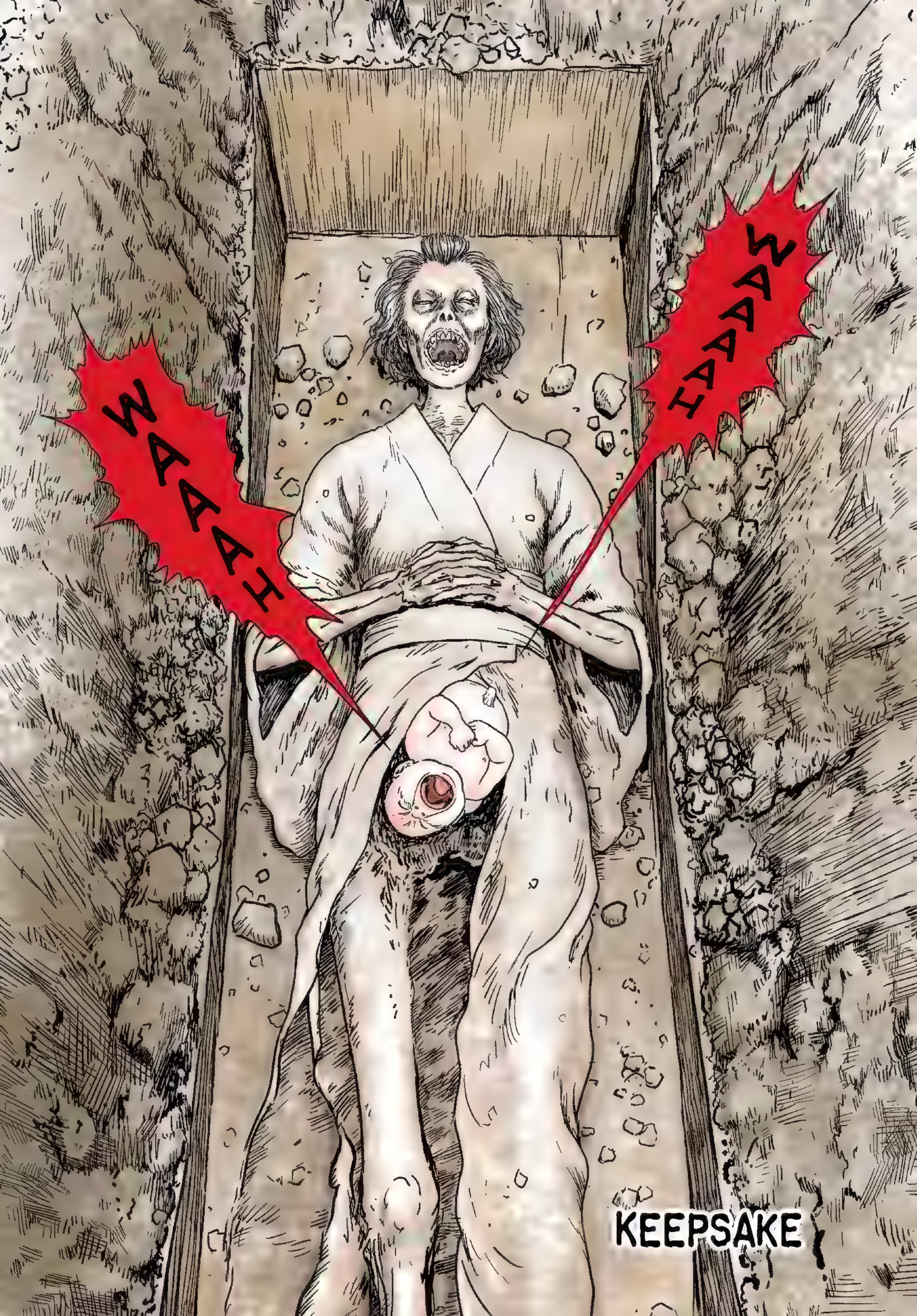
...AND NOW NO ONE WILL EVER KNOW HOW HE ENDED UP GETTING UNDERNEATH IT.

HE STILL REMAINS UNDER THE PRINCIPAL POST...

COLOR GALLERY

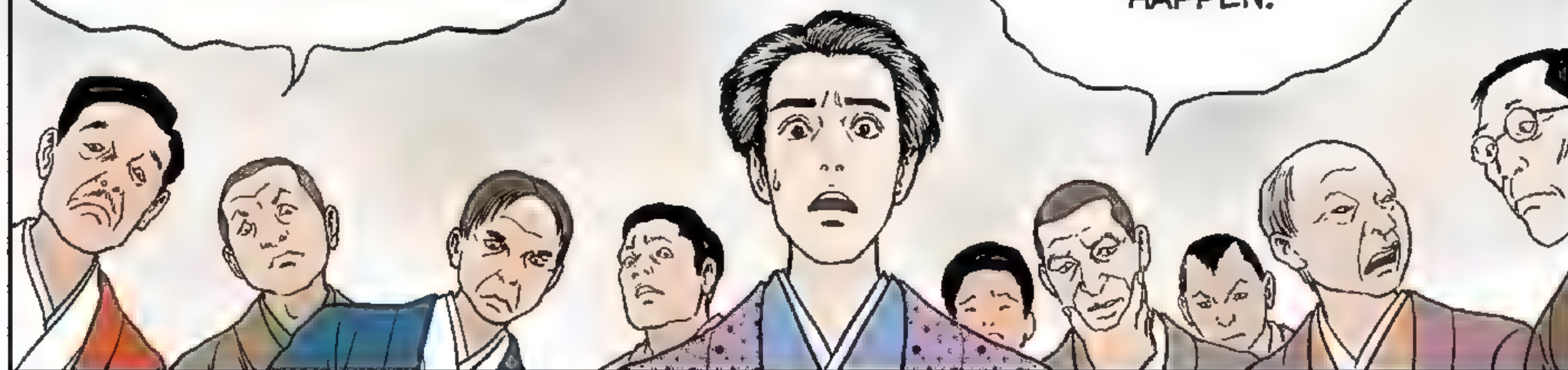
Frankenstein
in
Innsmouth

2018. 11. 4

KEEPSAKE

HEY! I WAS OUT AT THE GRAVEYARD THERE.
AND I HEARD A BABY CRYING SOMEWHERE.
WHAT? AN ABANDONED BABY?
NAH, TRUTH IS...MAYBE IT WAS JUST IN MY HEAD.
BUT IT SOUNDED LIKE IT WAS COMING FROM INSIDE THE BURIAL MOUND. THE ISHIKAWAS' TOMB...
石川家之墓
WAAAAAH
WAAAAAAH
WAAAAAH
MY LORD! IT'S TERRIBLE!!
WHAT'S THE MATTER, TOMEKICHI?
TH-THE MADAME'S GRAVE...
CHATTER
CHATTER

WAAAAH
WAAAH
KEEPSAKE

BEEN ABOUT NINE MONTHS SINCE THE MADAME PASSED. QUITE SOMETHING HOW IT GREW IN THE BELLY OF HER CORPSE.

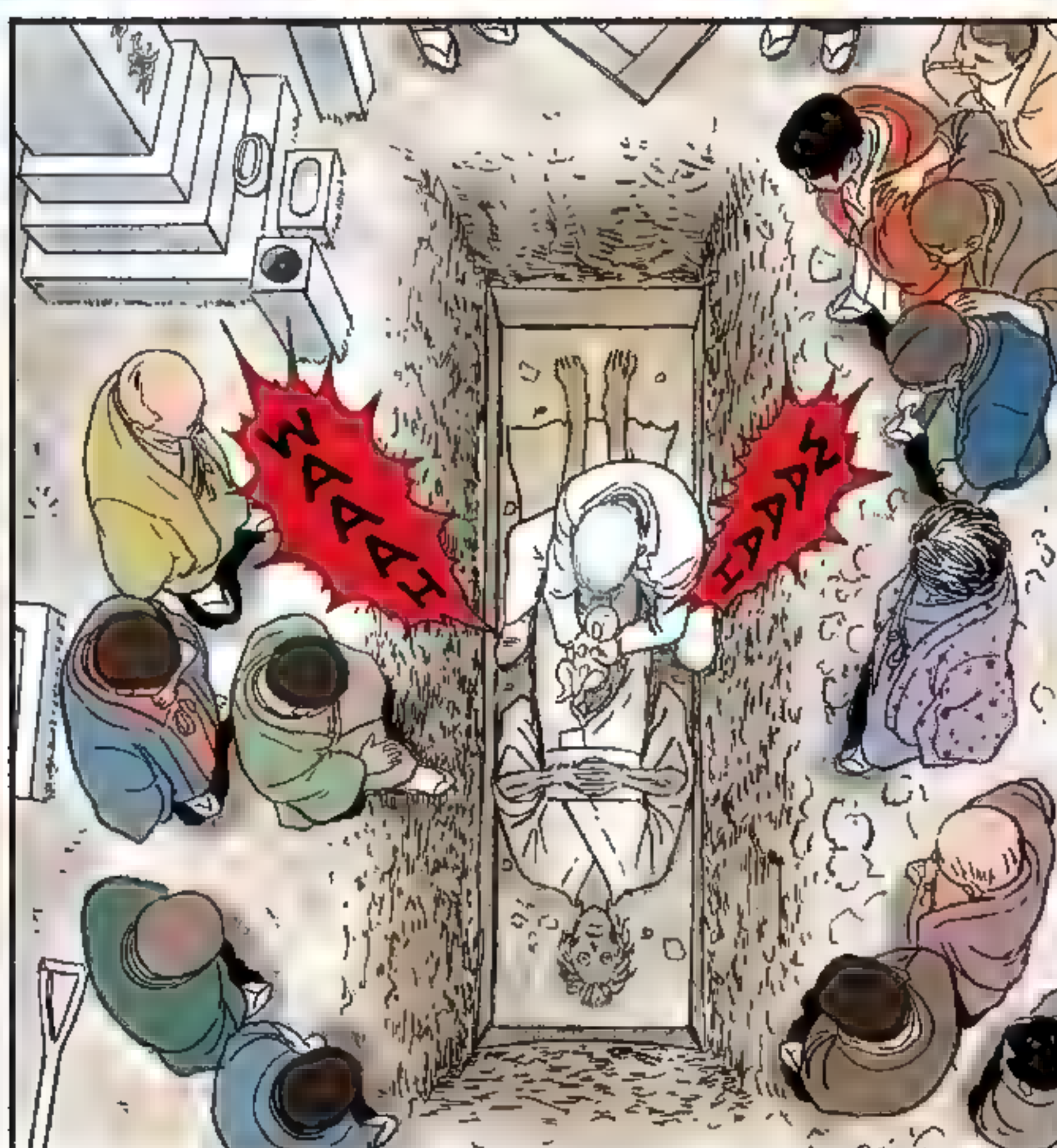
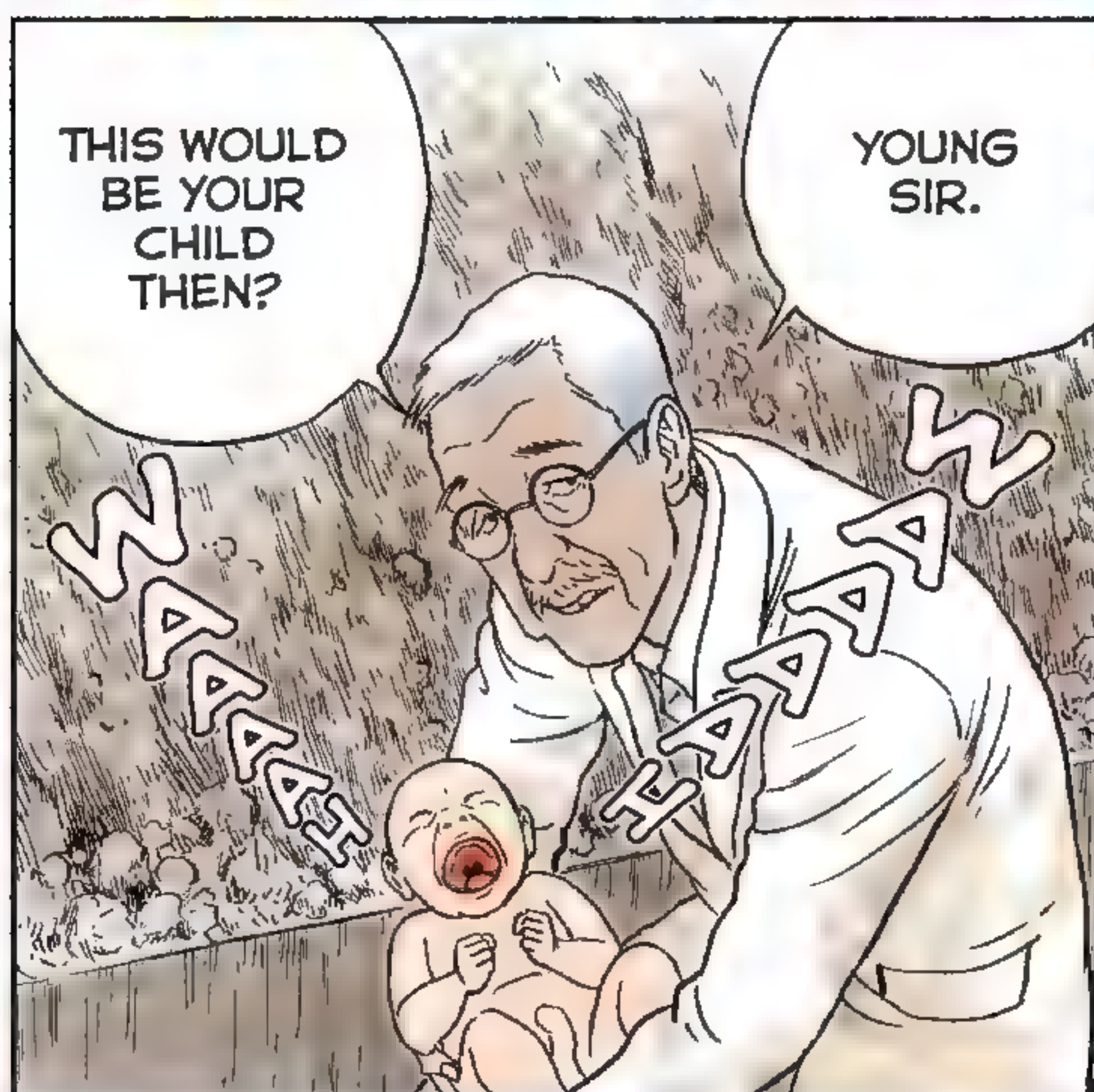
NOW THIS IS A SURPRISE... I'VE HEARD TALK OF THINGS LIKE THIS, BUT IT REALLY DOES HAPPEN.

THIS WOULD BE YOUR CHILD THEN?

YOUNG SIR.

WAAAAH

WAAAAH

WAAAH

WAAAH

SOMEONE MUST HAVE ABANDONED THE BABY IN THE GRAVE!

THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE!

TH—

THAT'S RIDICULOUS...

IMPOS-
SIBLE...

IM—

SEE? THE CORD'S STILL ATTACHED.

NO, THIS CHILD IS LEGITIMATE.

THEY ONLY JUST HAD A BABY OF THEIR OWN.

BUT WAIT A SECOND. THE YOUNG MASTER TOOK HIS MISTRESS AS HIS NEW WIFE.

IS THIS REALLY A HAPPY EVENT THEN, I WONDER?

THAT'S RIGHT. A KEEPSAKE FROM YOUR LATE WIFE.

AT ANY RATE, IT'S TO BE CELE-
BRATED, SIR...

WAAAAH

WAAAH

WAAAH
WAAAH
OH, IT'S SO DISTURBING. A BABY BORN OF A DEAD WOMAN...
BUT IT IS INDEED TOYOJI'S CHILD. WE MUST RAISE IT FOR APPEARANCES, IF NOTHING ELSE.
APPEARANCES WENT OUT THE WINDOW WHEN TOYOJI TOOK HIS MISTRESS AS HIS WIFE.
WHAT ON EARTH DO YOU WANT? I'M NOT RAISING THAT CHILD!
I BARELY HAVE ENOUGH MILK FOR SHINNOSUKE!
NURSING THE BABY OF YOUR FIRST WIFE — AND BORN OF A CORPSE!
YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS.
WELL, I'LL GET A NURSE FOR THE CHILD. YOU NEEDN'T WORRY, O-MITSU.
I'LL HAVE THE MAID O-TANE TAKE CARE OF HIM.

PLEASE TAKE CARE OF THE BABY, O-TANE.

OBVIOUSLY, YOU DON'T HAVE ANY MILK, SO GIVE IT WATER FROM THE RICE WASHING OR GOAT'S MILK.

YES... SIR.

AND WHAT'S THE CHILD'S NAME?

HIS NAME? RIGHT...

MANJURO'S GOOD, I SUPPOSE.

GOO GOO

GAH GAH

GAH GAH

OH, THERE, THERE.

MAN-JURO.

GAH

GAH

SO THEN WHY...?

BUT THE DEAD O-SUZU COULDN'T HAVE CHILDREN TO START WITH.

GAH GAH

GOO GOO

THE PREVIOUS YEAR...

DARLING.

ISN'T YOUR MISTRESS IN THE FAMILY WAY?

DO YOU INTEND TO MAKE THE CHILD YOUR HEIR?

YOU'VE GOT SOME NERVE JUST BECAUSE I CAN'T HAVE CHILDREN.

W-WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, O-SUZU?

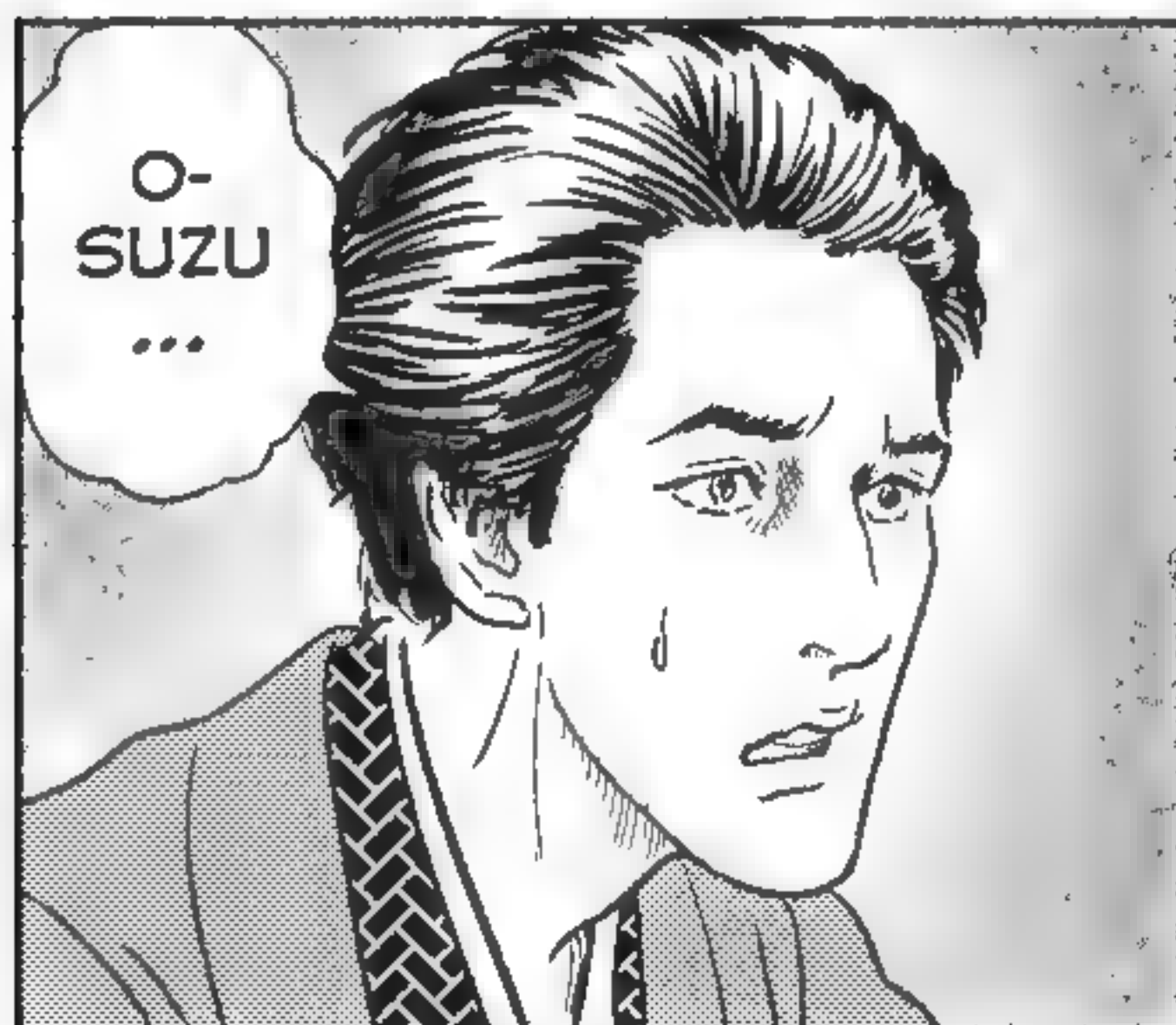
I KNOW EVERY-THING.

O-SUZU, HOW DO YOU...?

I'M SAYING IT'S A GOOD IDEA.

I'M NOT SAYING THIS OUT OF SPITE.

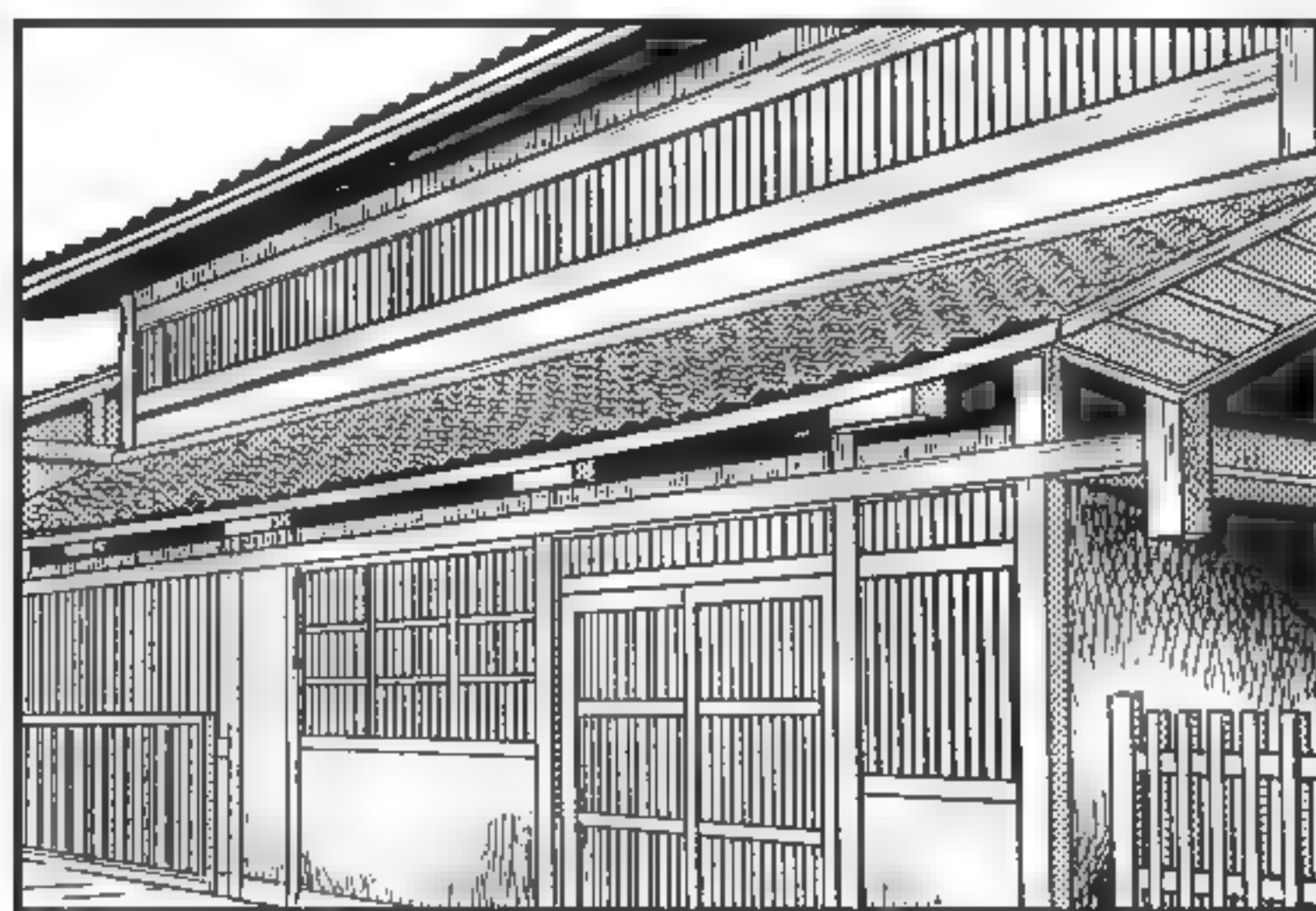
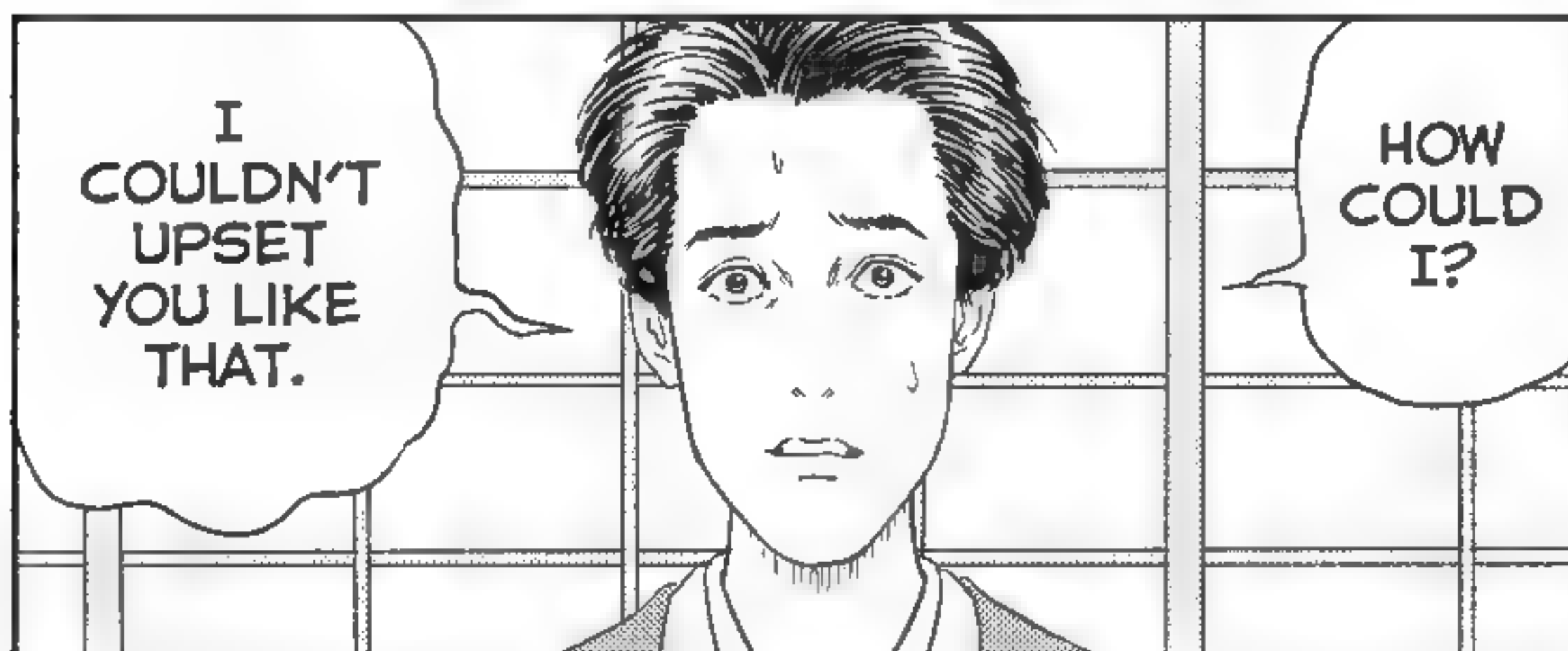
O-SUZU... WILL YOU STOP ALREADY?

IT'S FINE. YOU SHOULD.

O-SUZU...

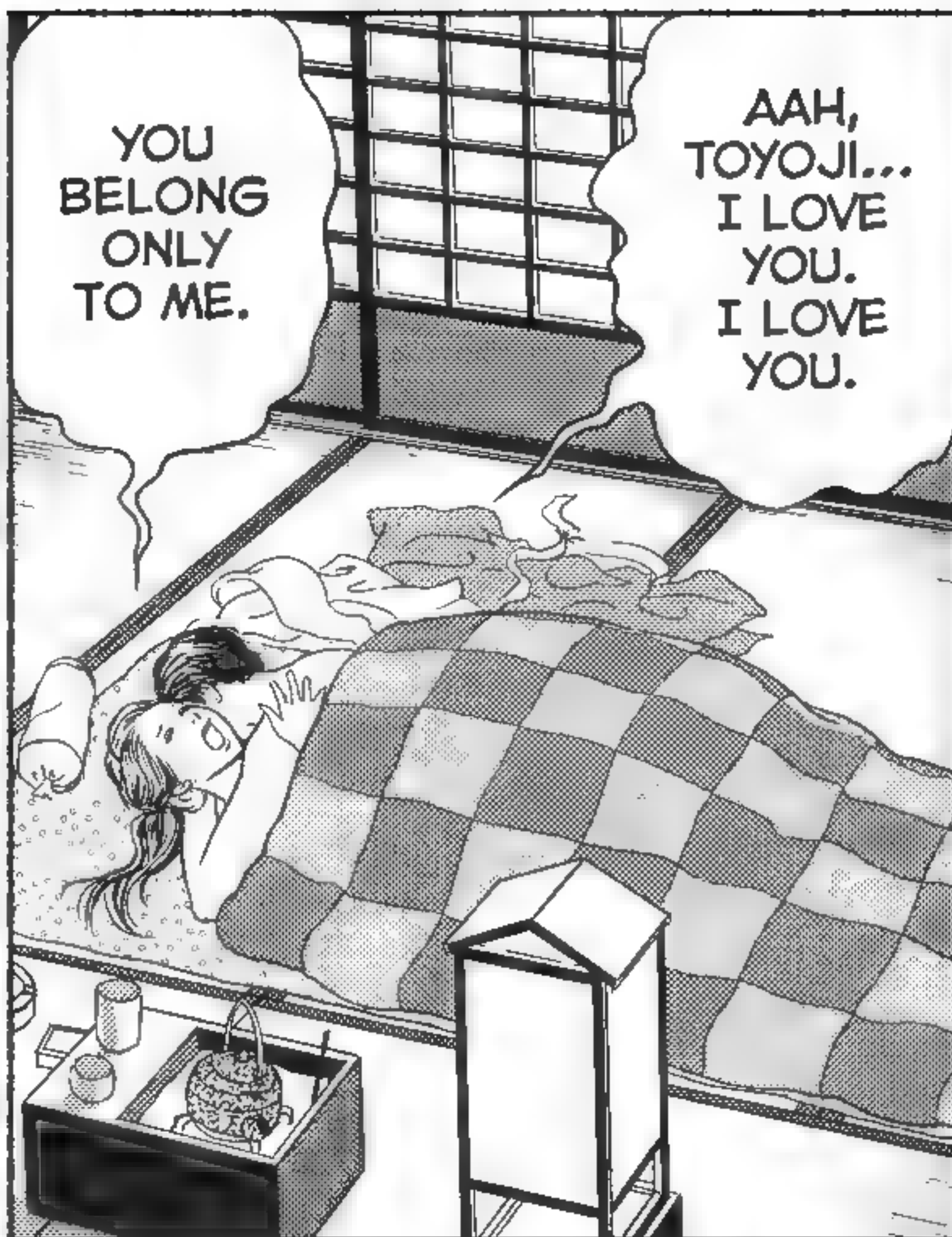
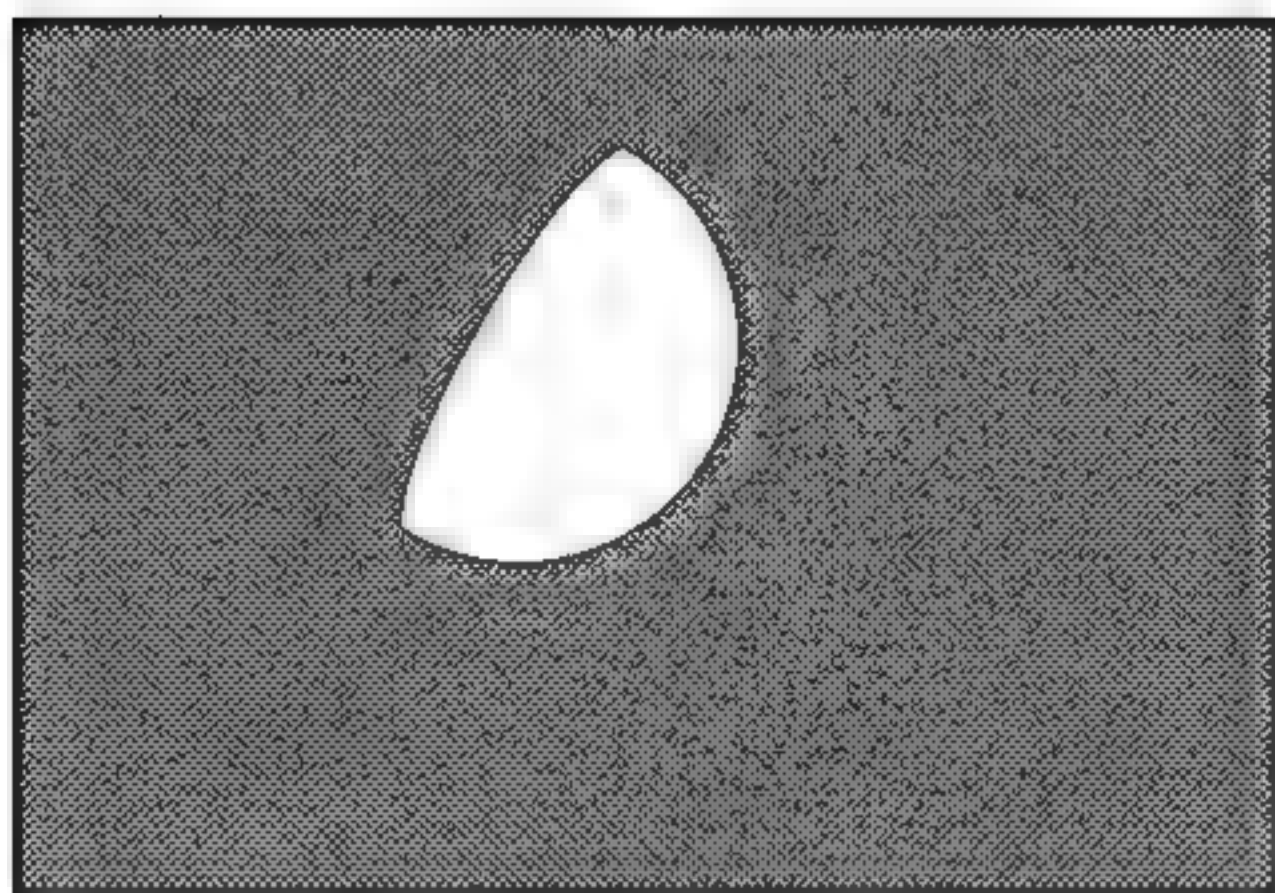
I HAVE THAT MUCH RIGHT AT LEAST.

THE BABY THAT CONCUBINE BEARS WILL BE *OUR* CHILD.

TOYOJI... YOU COULDN'T ACTUALLY HAVE SAID YES?

NO. THIS CHILD IS MINE.

...THAT'S WHAT SHE SAID. WHAT DO YOU THINK, O-MITSU?

I COULDN'T UPSET YOU LIKE THAT.

HOW COULD I?

AAH, TOYOJI... I LOVE YOU. I LOVE YOU.

YOU BELONG ONLY TO ME.

TOYOJI?

...WHAT IS IT?

KILL...

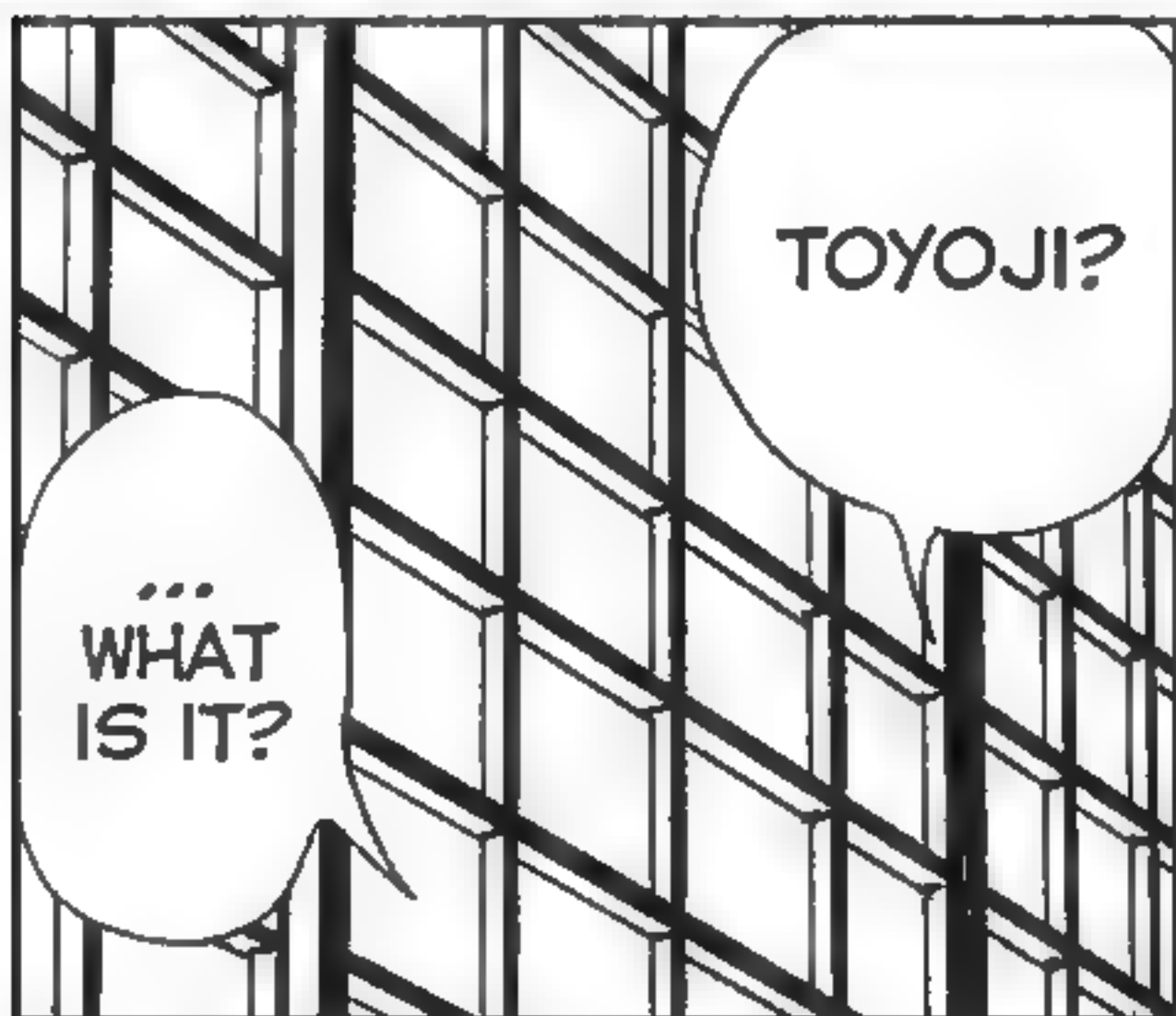
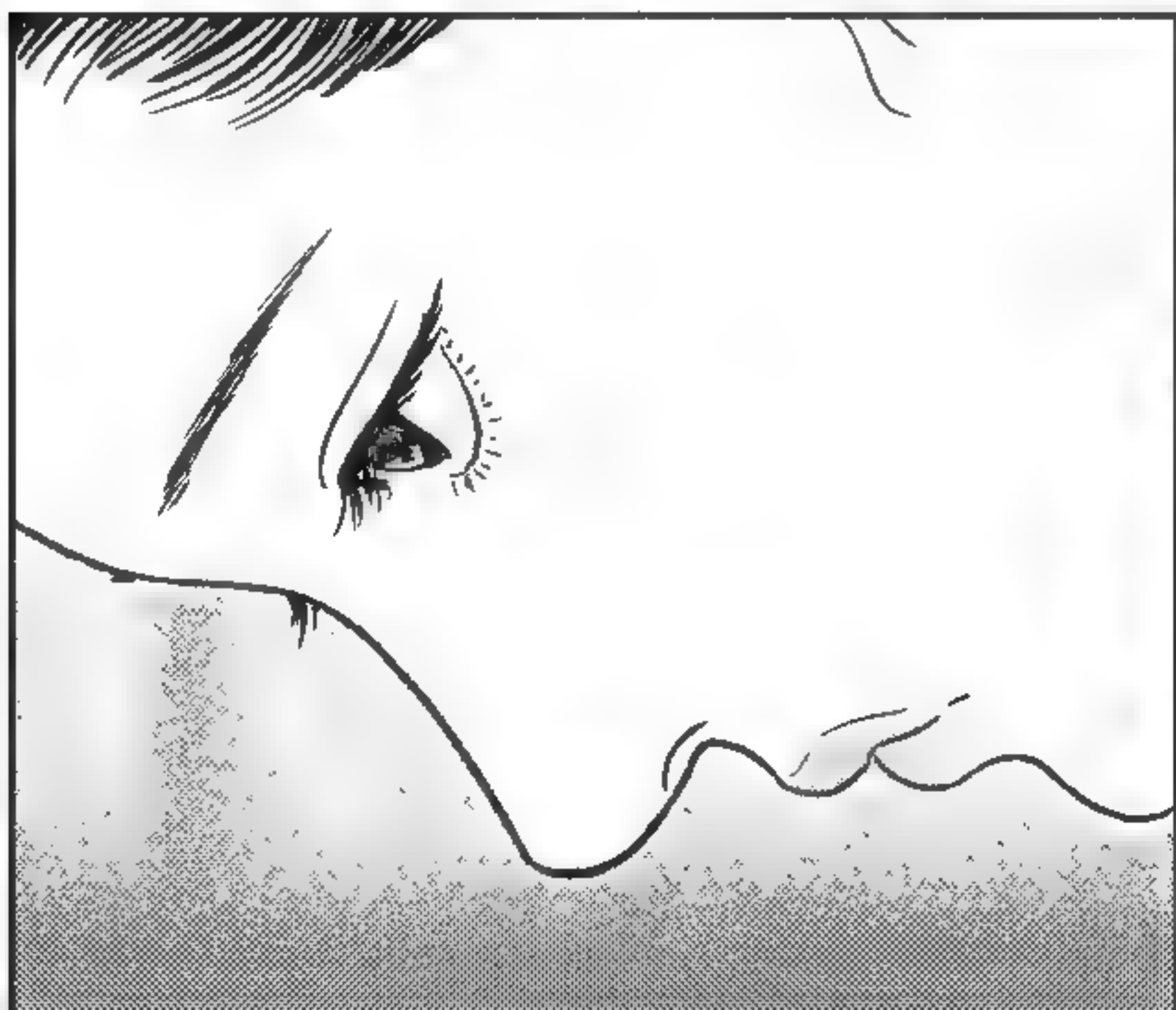
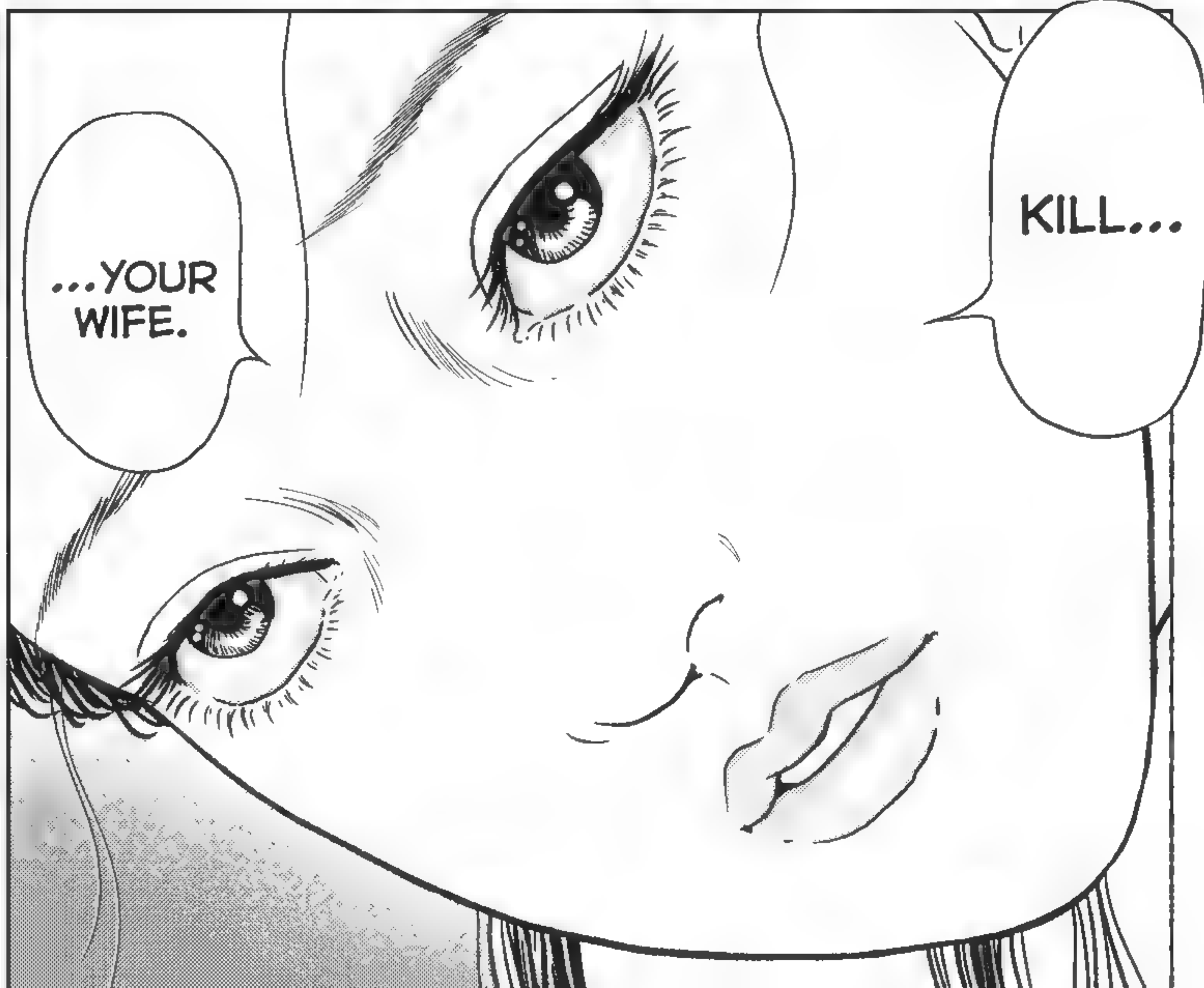
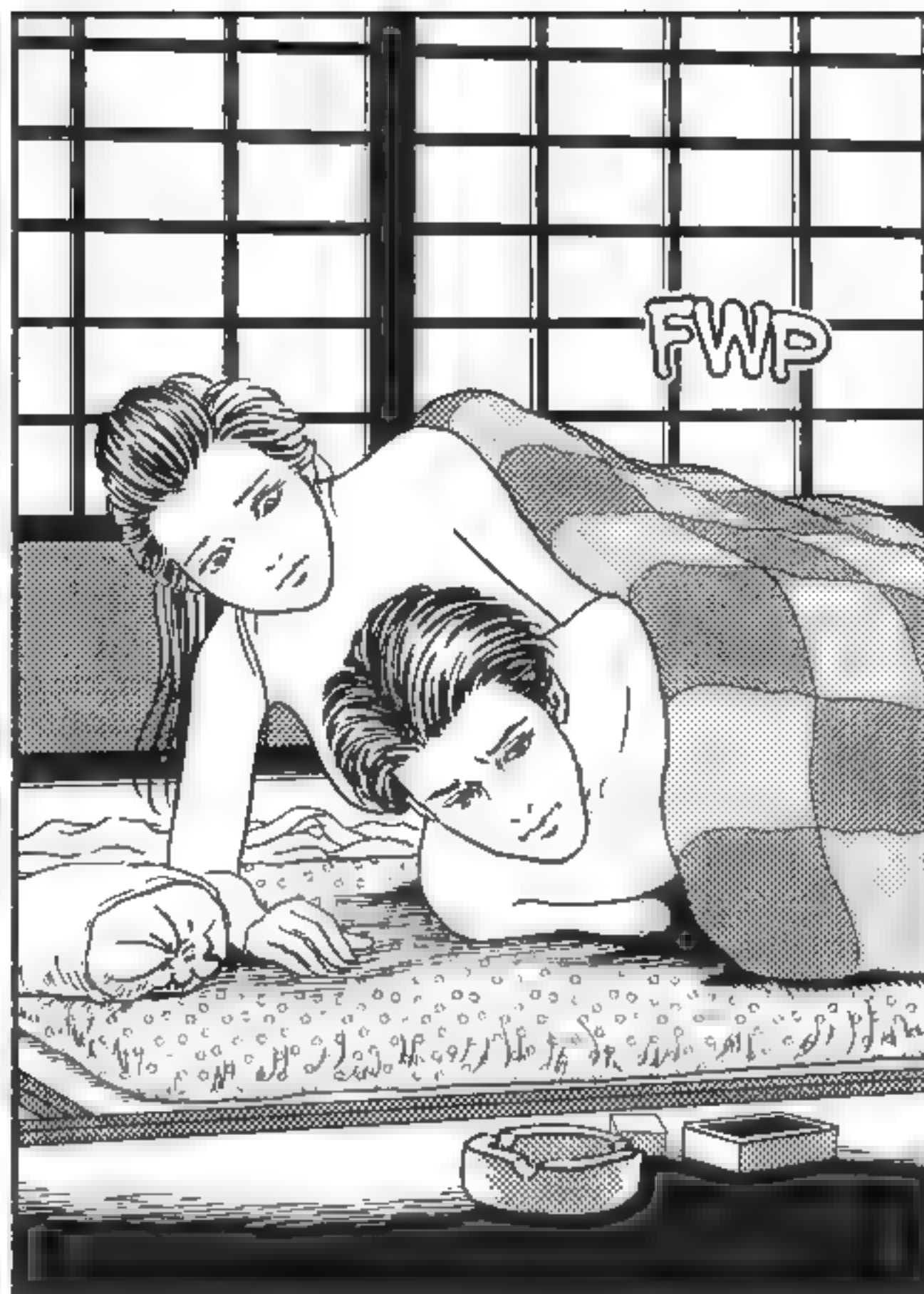
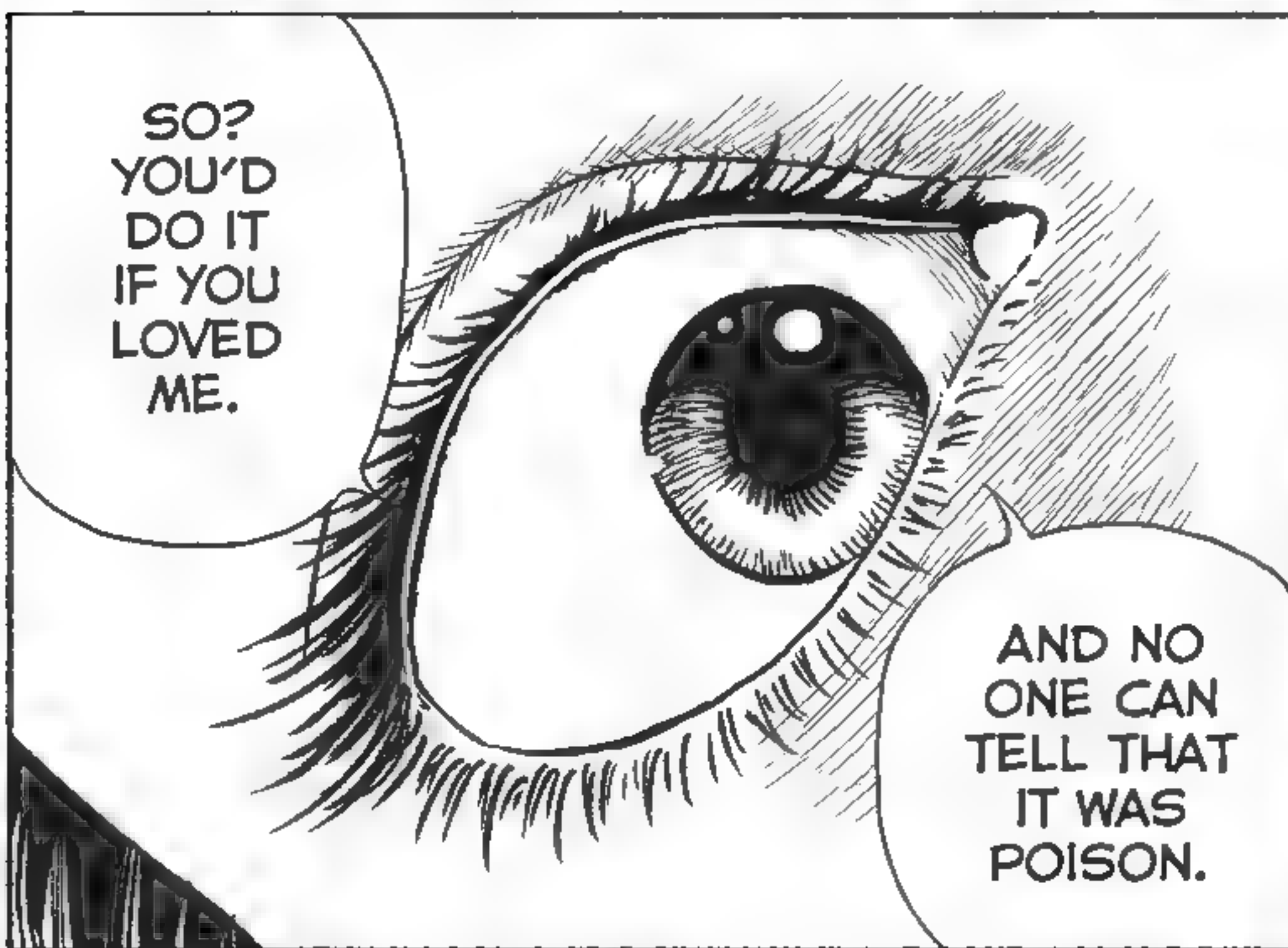
...YOUR WIFE.

FWP

SHF

HEY.

I KNOW SOMEONE WITH A POISON IMPORTED FROM EUROPE.

HE SAYS WHEN YOU ADMINISTER THIS POISON, THE PERSON GETS WEAKER AND WEAKER AND THEN DIES.

AND NO ONE CAN TELL THAT IT WAS POISON.

SO? YOU'D DO IT IF YOU LOVED ME.

A MONTH LATER ...

MADAME? ARE YOU FEELING POORLY?

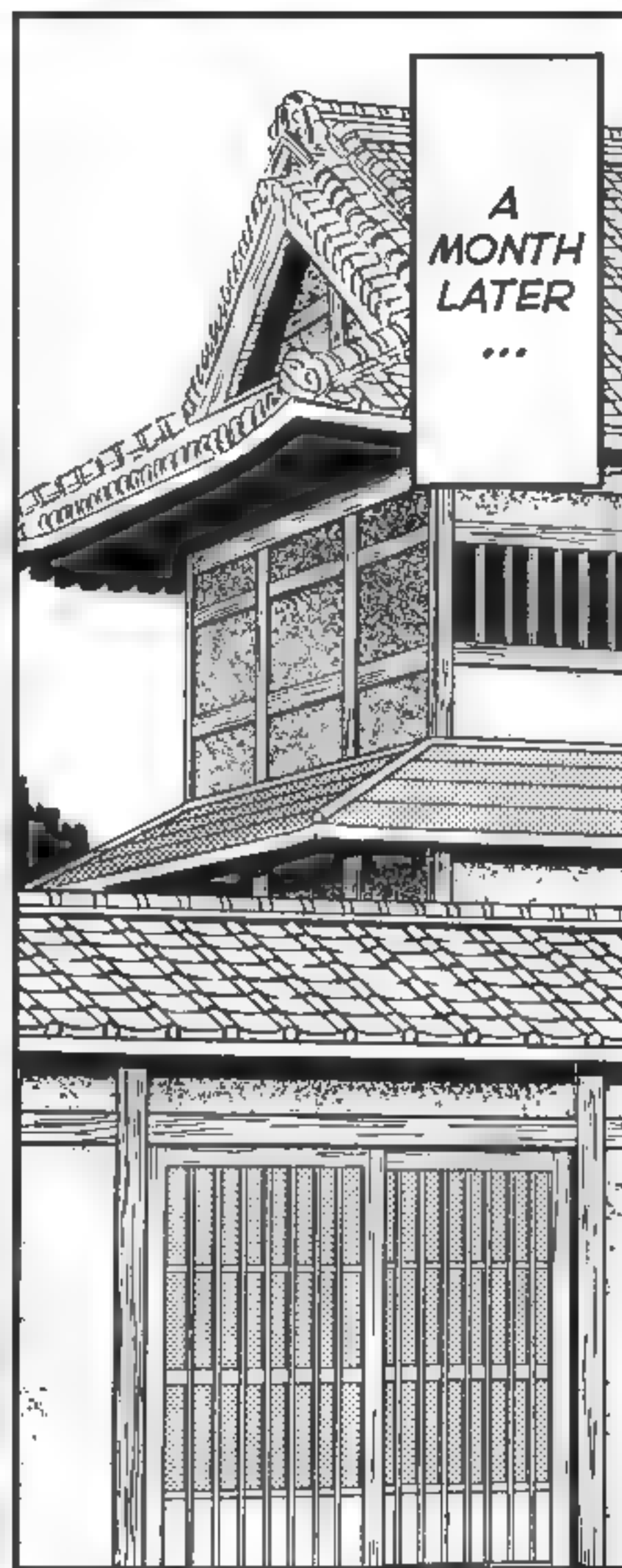
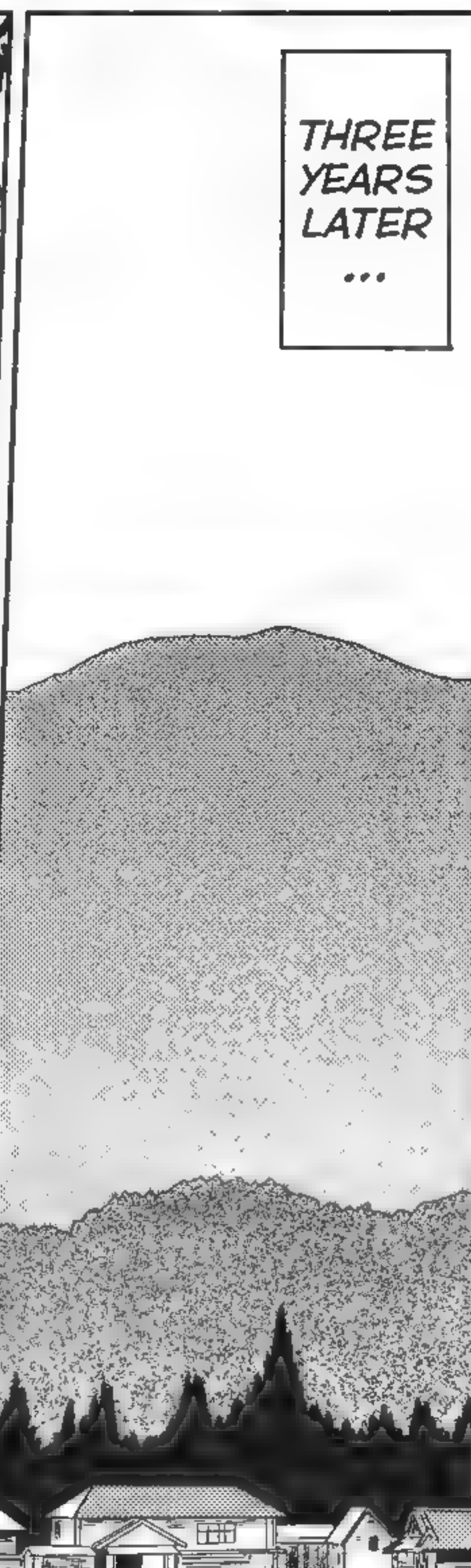
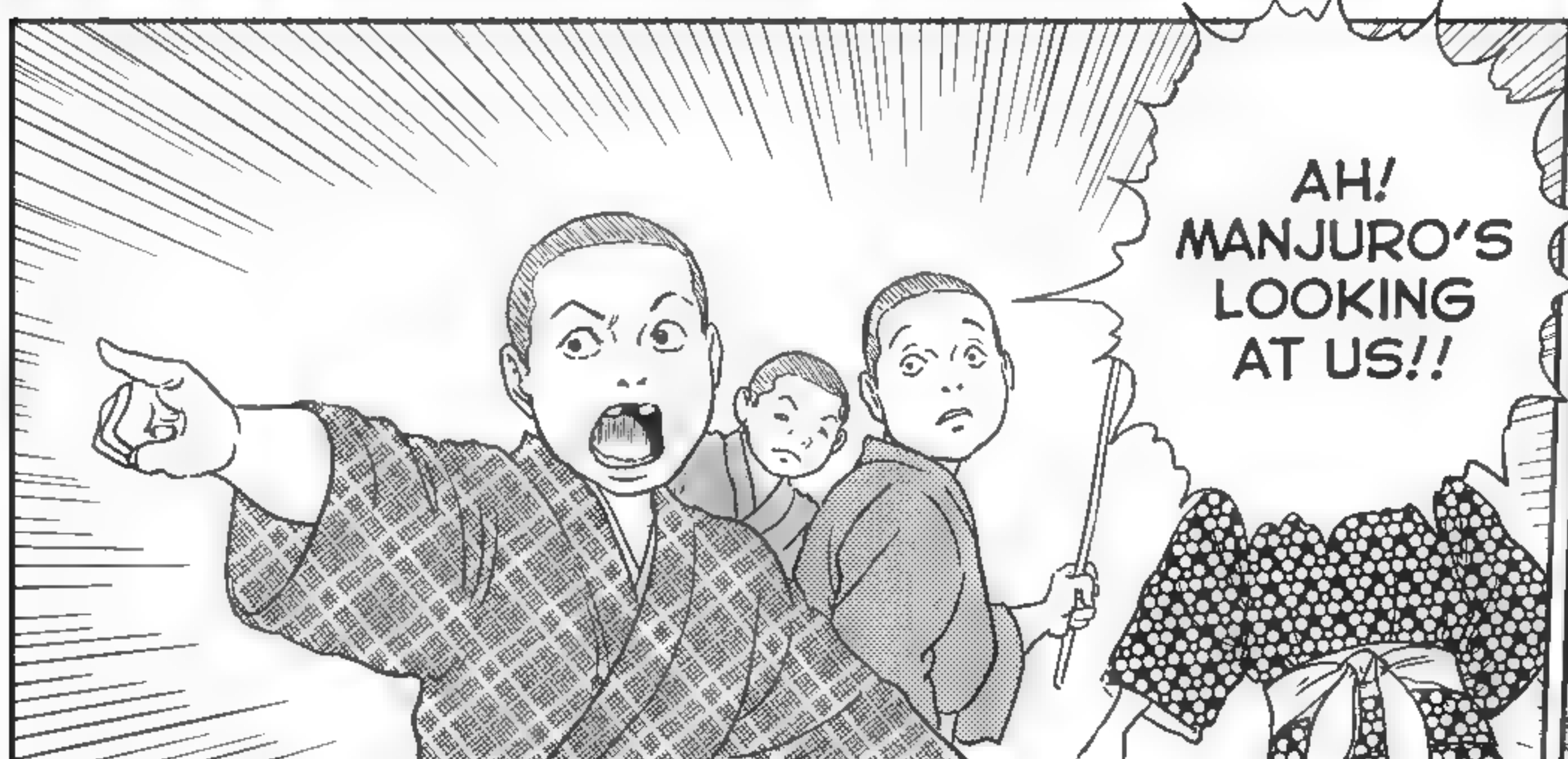
Y- YES...

I JUST TIRE SO EASILY OF LATE.

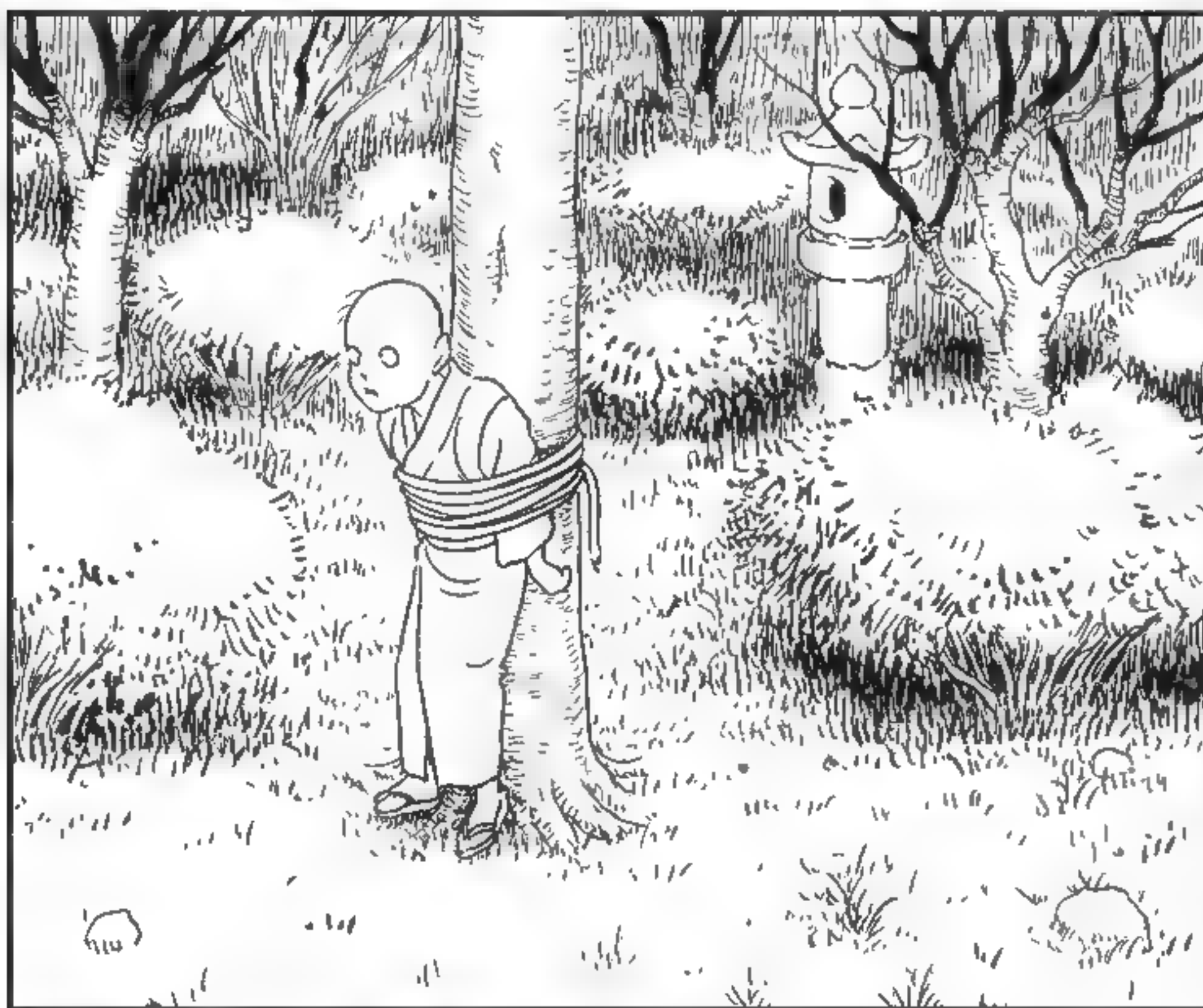
THUD

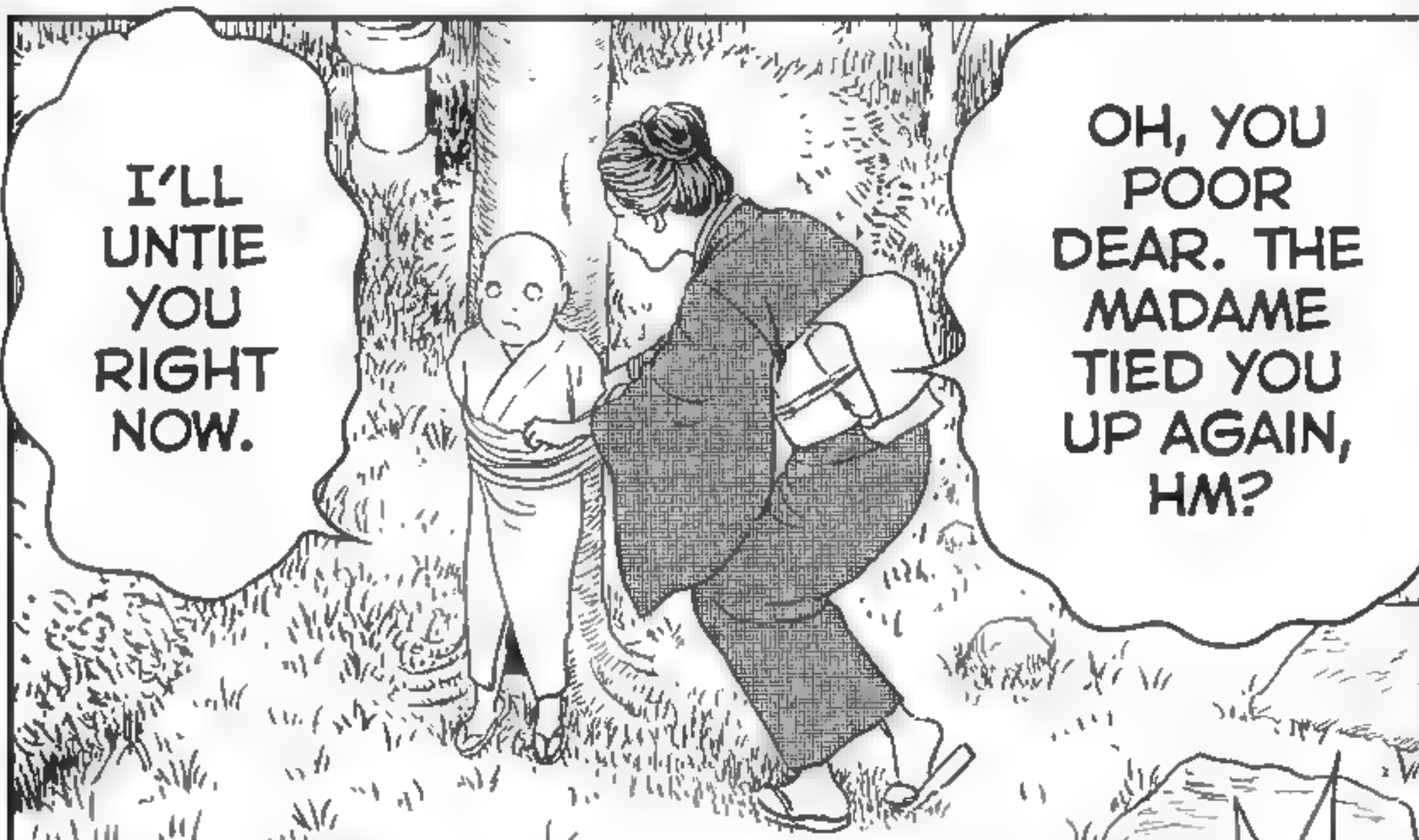
AH! MADAME!!

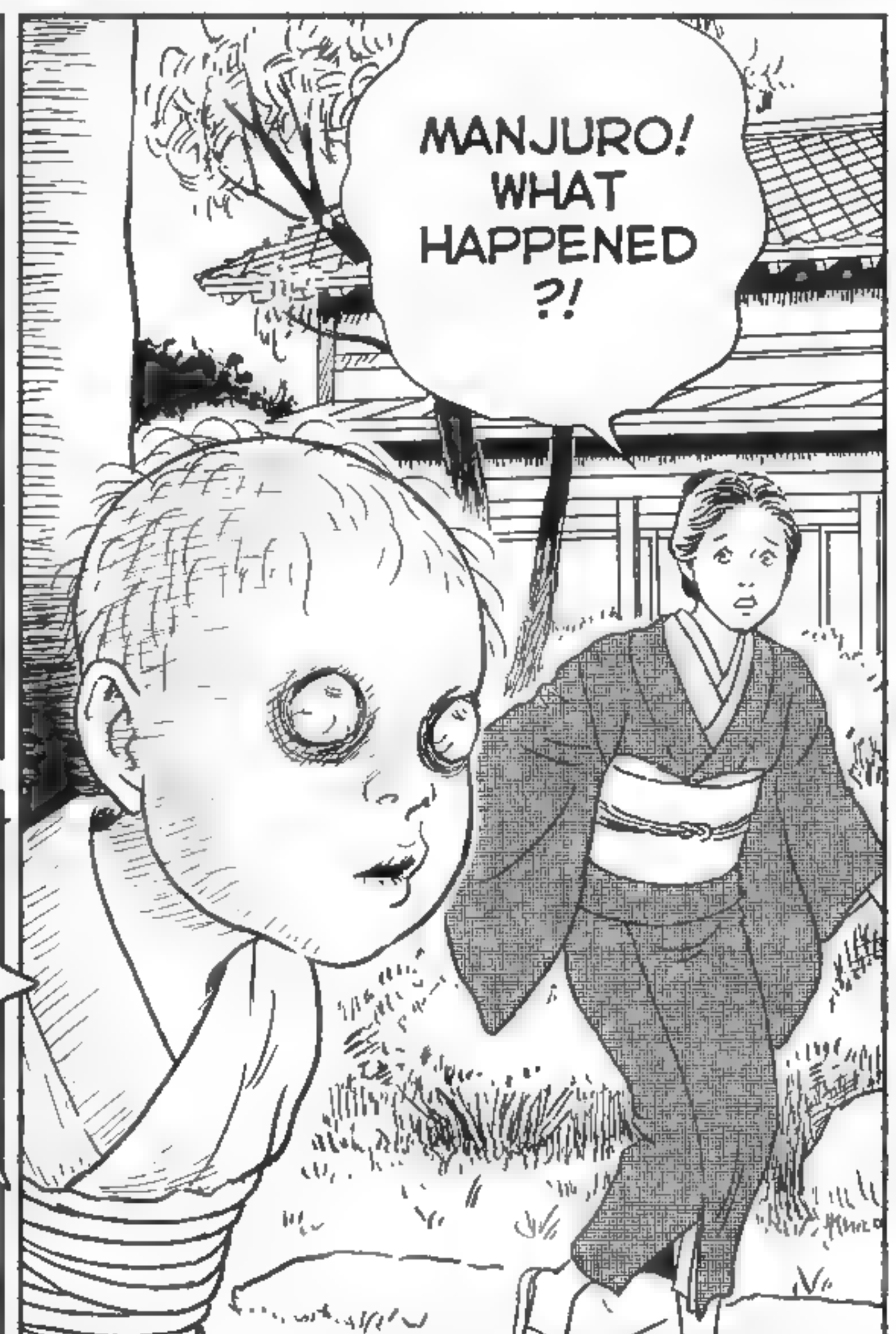
AND THEN A MONTH LATER— EXACTLY NINE MONTHS AGO, O-SUZU DIED.
JUST AS O-MITSU SAID, NO ONE REALIZED SHE'D BEEN POISONED.
BUT...SHE COULDN'T BEAR CHILDREN...
...AND YET SHE HAD A CHILD AFTER SHE DIED. IT'S BIZARRE.
THREE YEARS LATER ...
YAAAH!
AH! MANJURO'S LOOKING AT US!!

AAAH! CREEPYYYYY! RUUUUUUUN !!

MANJURO'S SCARING MEEEEE!!

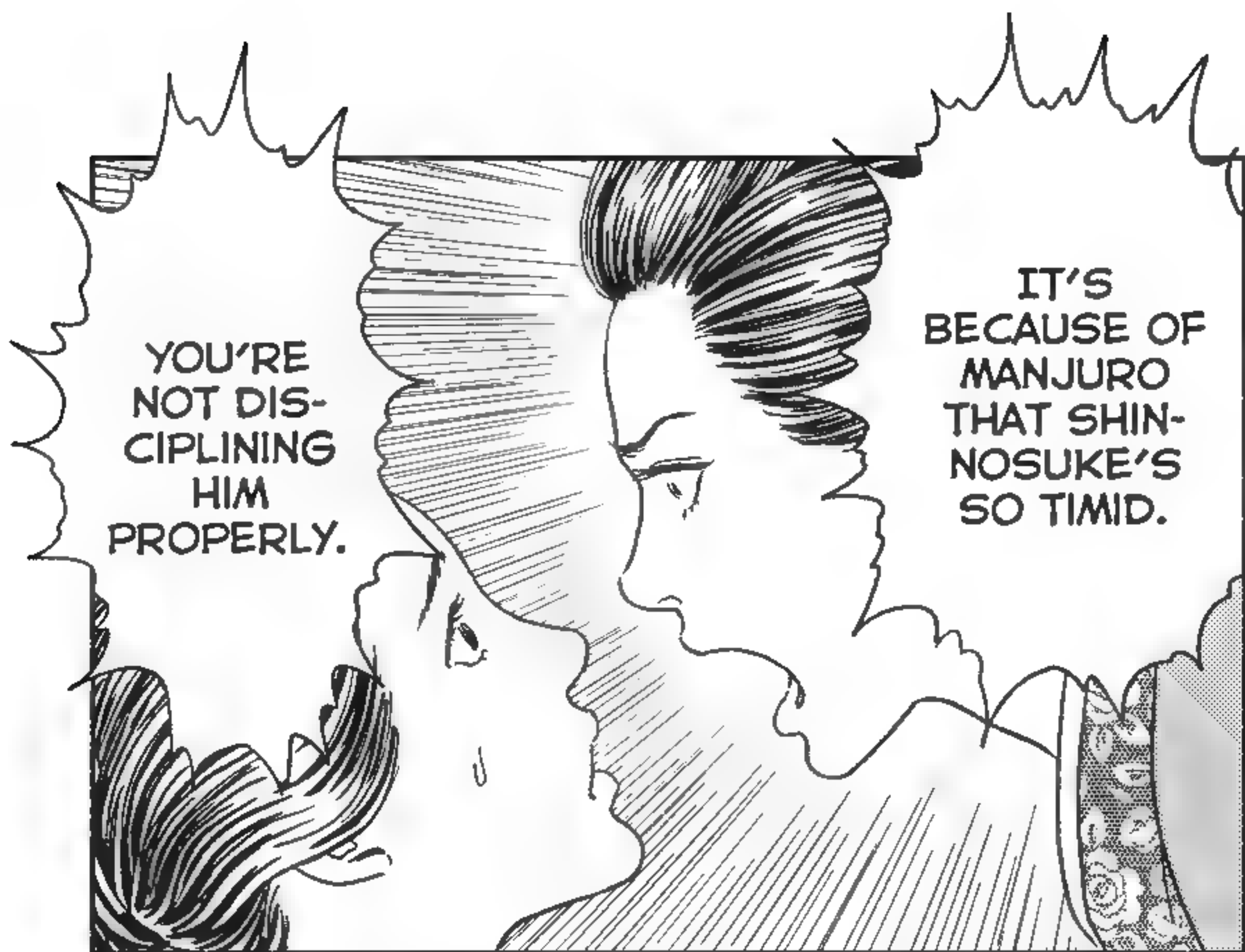
WHAT'S THE MATTER, SHINNOSUKE?

WAAAAH! MOMMY!

SHOO! SHOO!

MANJURO... YOU GO OVER THERE!!

OH, YOU POOR DEAR. THE MADAME TIED YOU UP AGAIN, HM?

I'LL UNTIE YOU RIGHT NOW.

MANJURO! WHAT HAPPENED?!

O-TANE!

AH!

YOU'RE NOT DIS-CIPLINING HIM PROPERLY.

IT'S BECAUSE OF MANJURO THAT SHIN-NOSUKE'S SO TIMID.

I-I'M TERRIBLY SORRY.

WHO SAID YOU COULD UNTIE HIM?!

MADAME, I BEG YOUR FORGIVE-NESS...

COME!! I'LL DISCIPLINE YOU FIRST!

AH!

AAH, DISGUSTING! IF MY FATHER-IN-LAW DIDN'T GO ON AND ON ABOUT APPEARANCES, I WOULD HAVE CHASED YOU TWO OUT A LONG TIME AGO!!

SPLASH

MADAME, I BEG YOU...
MANJURO DOESN'T MEAN ANY HARM.
SLAP
HE WAS BORN FROM A *CORPSE!!*
HIS VERY EXISTENCE IS HARMFUL!
EEE!!
EEAH! OW!!
MADAME! I BEG YOU!
KLATTER
HEY, O-MITSU...
YOU'RE STILL DOING THIS?
THAT'S ENOUGH ALREADY...
THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT. TO THINK YOU WOULD TRY TO...
...HAVE A CHILD WITH YOUR WIFE WHEN SHE WAS DYING!

HEH ...

HEH ...

HEH ...

HEH ...

HEH ...

HEH HEH HEH!

HEH HEH HEH HEH!

W-WHAT'S SO FUNNY, O-TANE?!

HEH! IT'S JUST...

SHE WASN'T DYING.

WHAT ?!

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER IF THEY'D MADE THE CHILD WHILE SHE WAS ALIVE.

BUT I SAW HIM. THE NIGHT OF THE WAKE...

THE MASTER WENT TO THE FORMER MADAME'S DEAD BODY.

MANJURO IS THE PRODUCT OF THAT COUPLING. I KNOW IT.
A NURSE'S INTUITION.
W—
WHAT?!
Y-YOU...
IS THIS TRUE?!
...
I-I HAD NO CHOICE...
SHE ASKED ME TO...
THE NIGHT OF THE WAKE...
... I WAS ALONE IN THE ALTAR ROOM.
BEFORE I KNEW IT, O-SUZU WAS LOOKING AT ME.

I... WANT A BABY...

DARLING... COME TO ME...

I... SHE JUST ASKED ME TO.

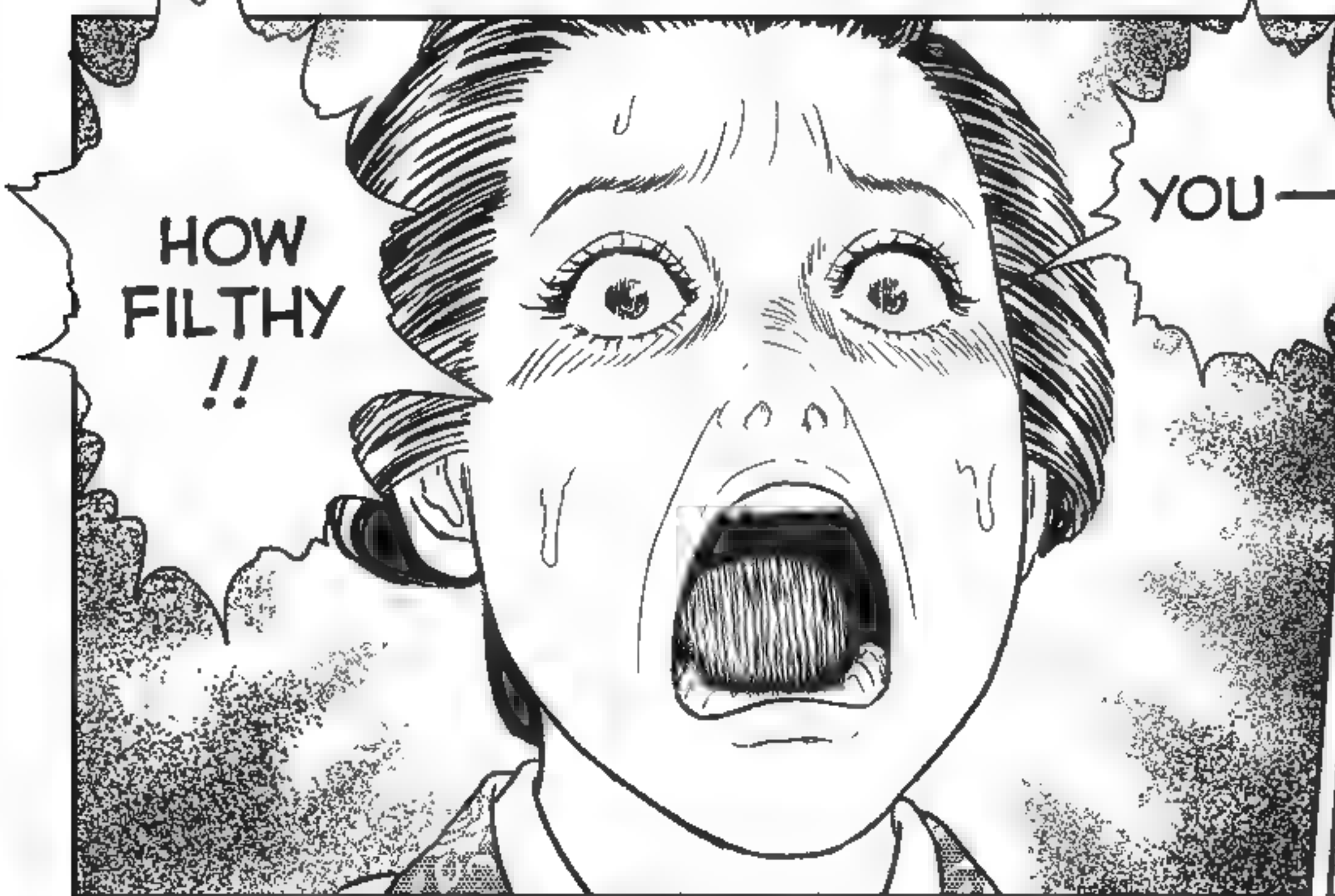
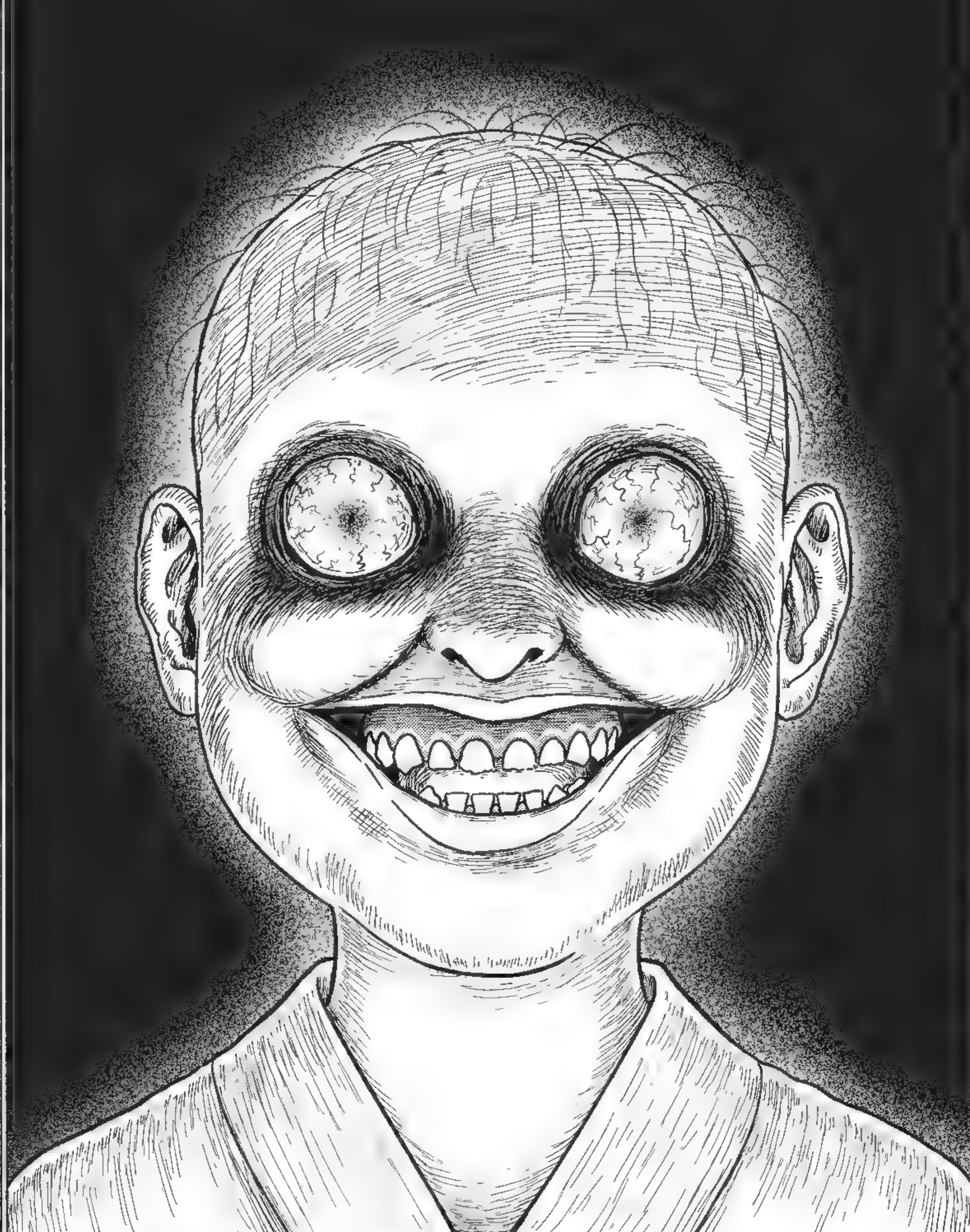
YOU—

HOW FILTHY!!

AH!

EEEE!!

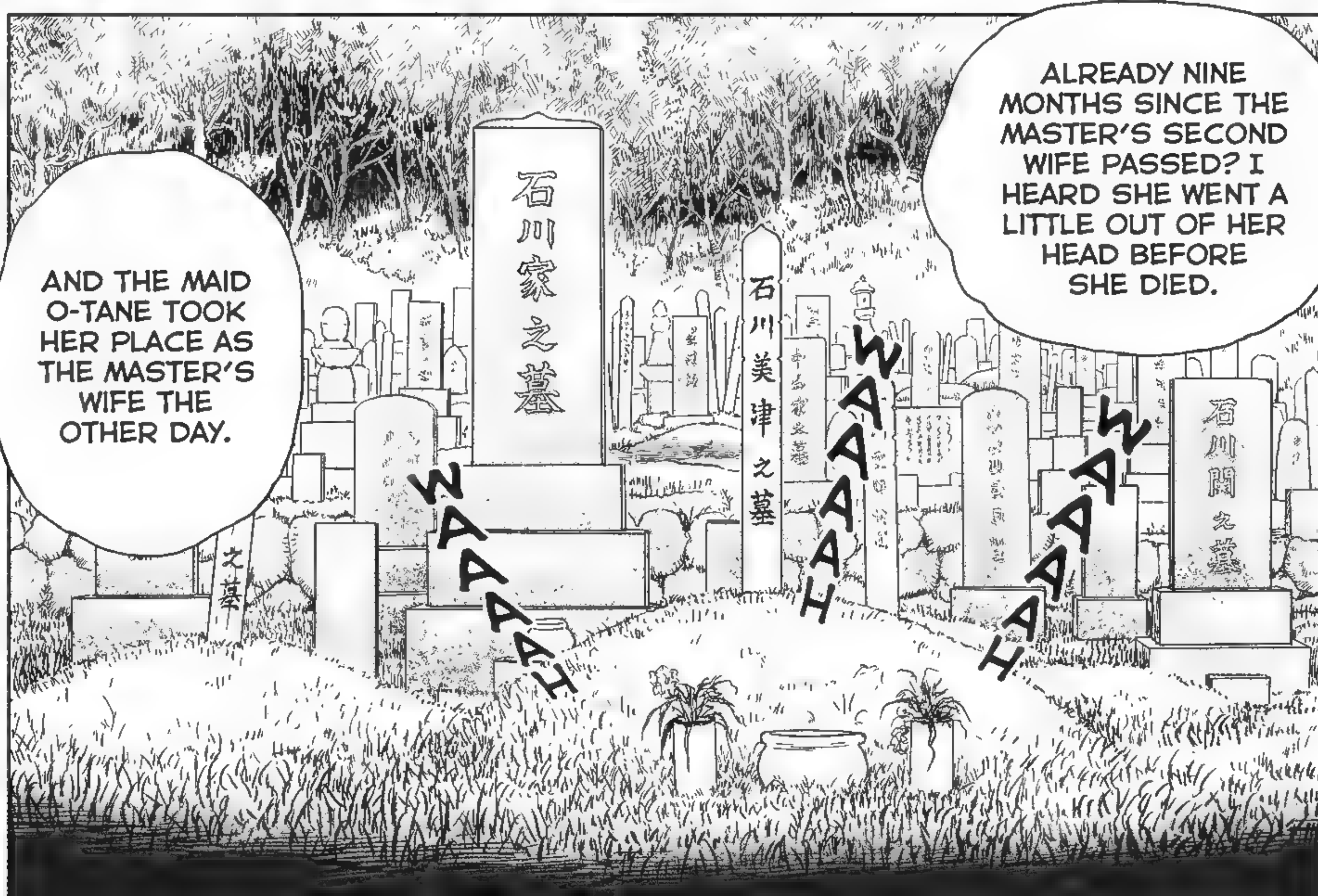
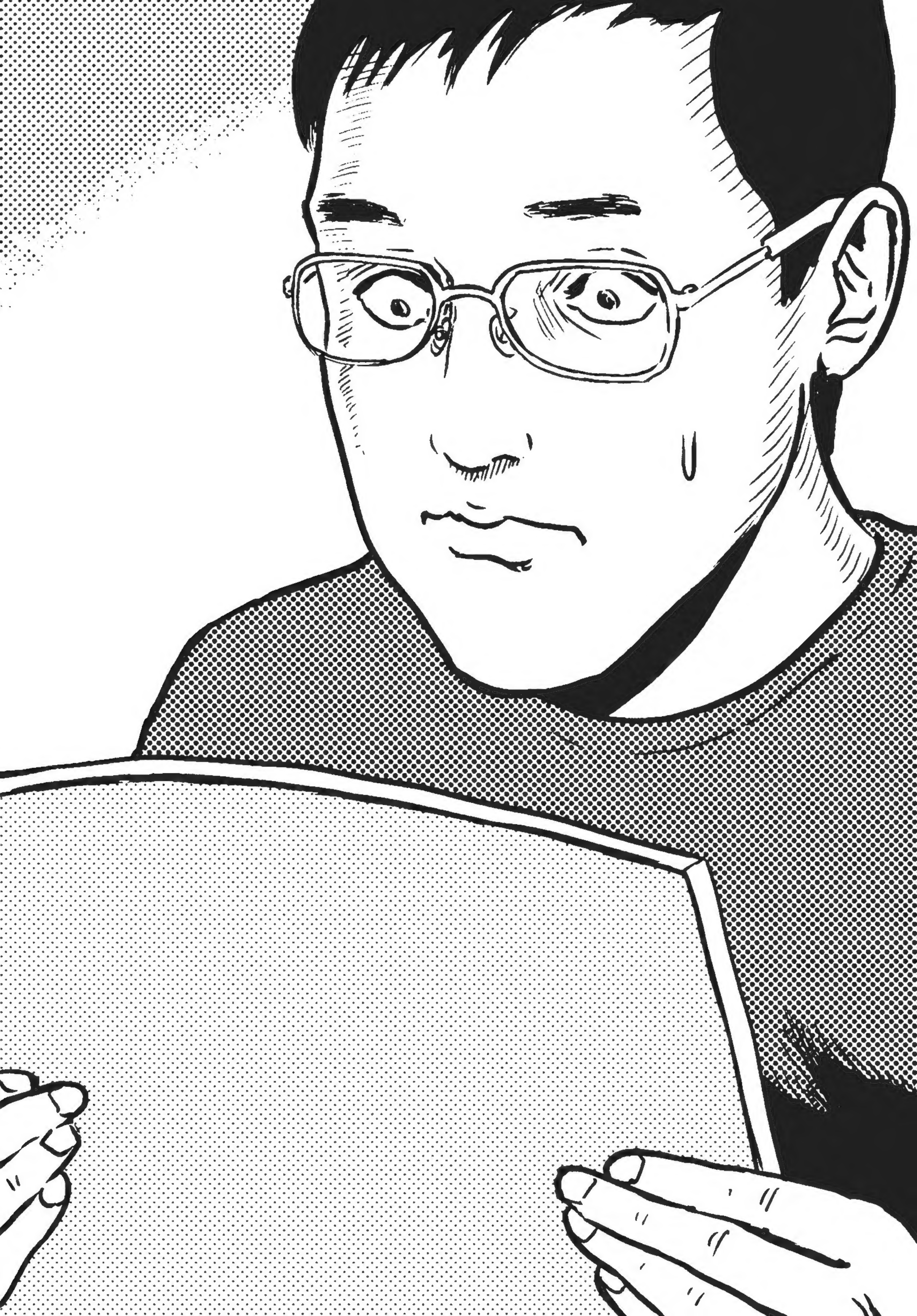
ALREADY NINE MONTHS SINCE THE MASTER'S SECOND WIFE PASSED? I HEARD SHE WENT A LITTLE OUT OF HER HEAD BEFORE SHE DIED.

WAAAAH

WAAAAH

AND THE MAID O-TANE TOOK HER PLACE AS THE MASTER'S WIFE THE OTHER DAY.

WAAAAH

石川家之墓

石川美津之墓

石川閑之墓

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Junji Ito made his professional manga debut in 1987 and since then has gone on to be recognized as one of the greatest contemporary artists working in the horror genre. His titles include *Tomie* and *Uzumaki*, which have been adapted into live-action films; *Gyo*, which was adapted into an animated film; and his short story collections *Fragments of Horror*, *Frankenstein*, *Shiver* and *Smashed*, all of which are available from VIZ Media.

Ito's influences include classic horror manga artists Kazuo Umezz and Hideshi Hino, as well as authors Yasutaka Tsutsui and H.P. Lovecraft.

His collection *Frankenstein* won the 2019 Eisner Award in the "Best Adaptation from Another Medium" category and his latest long-form manga, *No Longer Human*, has received critical acclaim.

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VENUS IN THE BLIND SPOT

Story & Art by Junji Ito

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